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AUTHOR Long, David; And Others
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ABSTRACT

This report presents new findings on the effectiveness of Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program in Cleveland as well as initial results from the Cleveland Student Parent Demonstration, a special project undertaken as part of the LEAP evaluation. LEAP is a statewide initiative that uses financial incentives and penalties to promote school attendance by pregnant and parenting teens on welfare. The program also offers teens case management and child care and transportation assistance. LEAP requires school attendance or preparation for the General Educational Development (GED) test. Since the program began in 1989, the state has been evaluating it in 12 Ohio counties. The Cleveland Student Parent Demonstration assessed the effectiveness of enhanced services beyond LEAP. Additional services were provided to about half of the 1,392 LEAP students in the Cleveland area. Findings from the Cleveland area evaluation indicate that LEAP is a viable, low-cost approach that improves school completion. The financial incentive structure affected nearly all participants, with more than three-quarters earning bonuses and two-thirds qualifying for grant reductions. In addition, participant graduation and GED completion rates increased. Findings also indicated that the enhanced services added to LEAP's beneficial effects on school completion. (Contains 18 tables, 2 figures, a box (chart), and 23 references.) (SLD)

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LEAP

The Educational Effects of LEAP and Enhanced Services in Cleveland

Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting Program for Teenage Parents on Welfare

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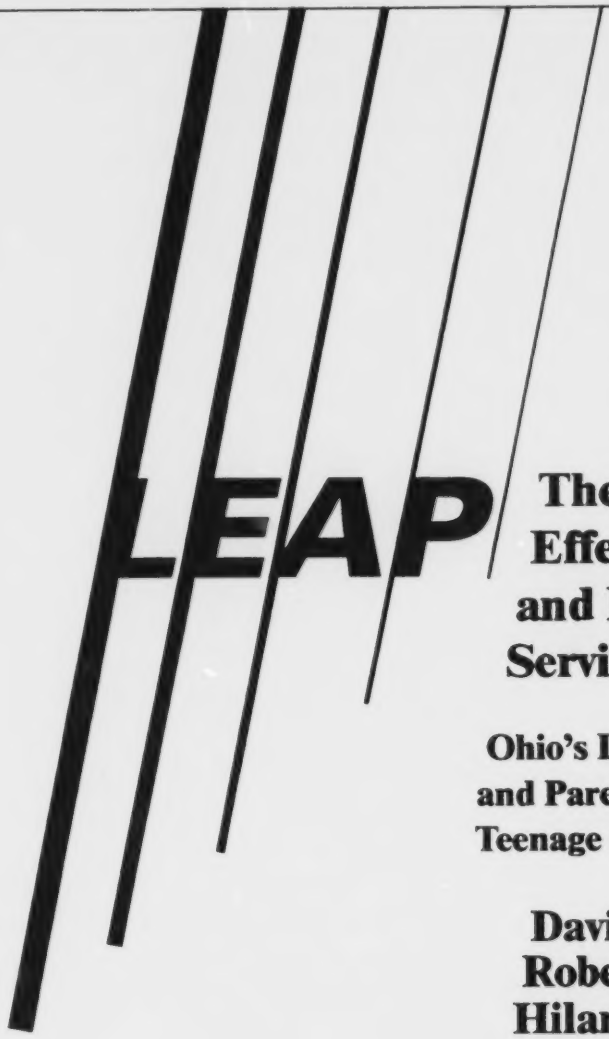

The Educational Effects of LEAP and Enhanced Services in Cleveland

Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting Program for Teenage Parents on Welfare

David Long
Robert G. Wood
Hilary Kopp

with

Rebecca Fisher

October 1994

Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation

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Phoebe Hoss edited the report, assisted by Michael Wilde. Patt Pontevolpe and Stephanie Cowell did the word-processing.

The Authors

PREFACE

This report presents new findings of clear relevance to two critical domestic policy issues: the large number of unwed teen mothers – a group at risk of spending many years on public assistance – and the continuing high rates at which inner-city youth drop out of school. In 1989, the state of Ohio sought to address both issues, and to do so on a large scale. Targeting all of the state's teen mothers on welfare who had not completed high school, Ohio's LEAP program uses financial incentives and penalties, combined with case management and support services, as a means to promote school attendance and completion. In effect, LEAP ties the size of the welfare grant to a teen mother's school attendance.

This is the third in a series of reports from a study spanning 12 counties in Ohio. It is being conducted by MDRC for the Ohio Department of Human Services. The first report showed that, after the expected start-up problems, LEAP proved operationally feasible: schools and the welfare department implemented the reporting and data systems needed to operate the bonus and grant reduction system and to manage the program. The second report, based on 7 of those 12 counties, found that LEAP prevented some in-school teens from dropping out and brought some dropouts back to school. This third report, which focuses only on Cleveland, shows that this effort paid off, translating into a significant increase in school completion over a three-year follow-up period. It also shows that, within this overall positive story, there is a particularly encouraging message about LEAP's success with teens who were enrolled in school when they entered the program: they experienced substantial educational gains, mainly in receipt of regular high school diplomas rather than GEDs. However, there is a clearly discouraging story for teens who had dropped out of school prior to their exposure to LEAP but who later became subject to the program: this group experienced little if any gain in high school graduation or GED attainment rates, and a substantial number of them repeatedly had their monthly welfare grant cut for failing to return to school or attend regularly.

To summarize the new results in numerical terms:

- LEAP increased overall school completion: 21.1 percent of LEAP teens had graduated from high school or received a GED within the three years of follow-up, compared with 15.5 percent of teens in a randomly selected control group, for a gain of 5.6 percentage points.

- Gains were large for in-school teens: 29.2 percent of teens who were initially in school had graduated or received a GED, compared with 20.4 percent of controls, for a gain of 8.8 percentage points or close to a 50 percent increase.

- Gains were minimal at best for out-of-school teens: 11.1 percent had graduated or received a GED, compared with 8.6 percent of the control group, for a gain of only 2.6 percentage points. Twenty-two percent of the initially out-of-school teens were scheduled for repeated grant reductions.

The report also contrasts the effectiveness of the relatively low-cost LEAP model with an enriched version, which offered additional services in certain Cleveland schools and community organizations. The study provides some evidence that this "enhanced" version of LEAP increased the success of the basic model in encouraging in-school teens to complete school.

Future LEAP reports will address important open questions: Are the positive Cleveland findings on school completion repeated in other counties? Does LEAP have any effect on repeat pregnancies, post-secondary education, or long-term employment and welfare receipt? How do the program's benefits compare to its relatively modest costs?

While the final results are not in, these interim findings are sufficiently encouraging to suggest that other states seriously consider incorporating the LEAP approach into their welfare reform efforts. As they do so, they should remember that LEAP includes several elements – bonuses, grant reductions, case management, support services, and existing in-school special classes and supports – and that pulling the package apart could reduce such a program's success.

But while the LEAP results are positive, there are also clear limits to the program's likely ultimate impact on school dropout rates and long-term welfare receipt. Welfare departments have little control over what teens experience once they are in school. Earlier LEAP reports found that a troublingly large number of teens described their schools as dangerous and frightening places where learning was difficult. Clearly, dramatic improvements will require efforts to transform the school environment. If welfare-based changes such as LEAP were complemented by positive changes within the schools, LEAP's promotion of school completion might be even more successful.

Finally, it is important to emphasize the indispensable support of the funders of the LEAP evaluation as a whole and this report specifically. It is they, and the committed administrators and staff in Ohio, who make this work possible.

Judith M. Gueron
President

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABE	adult basic education
AFDC	Aid to Families with Dependent Children
CCDHS	Cuyahoga County Department of Human Services
GED	General Educational Development certification
GRADS	Graduation, Reality and Dual-Role Skills
JOBS	Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program
JTPA	Job Training Partnership Act (1982)
LEAP	Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting Program
MDRC	Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation
NLSY	National Longitudinal Survey on Youth

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW

This report presents new findings on the effectiveness of Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program in Cleveland as well as initial results from the Cleveland Student Parent Demonstration, a special project undertaken as part of the LEAP evaluation. LEAP is a statewide initiative that uses financial incentives and penalties to promote school attendance by pregnant and parenting teenagers on welfare, the group most likely to become long-term welfare recipients. The program also offers teens case management and child care and transportation assistance. The program requires teens who are in school to attend regularly, while those who have dropped out must return to school or enter a program to prepare for the GED (General Educational Development) test, which one must pass to receive an Ohio Certificate of High School Equivalence. By requiring school attendance, LEAP seeks to increase the likelihood of teens' completing school and eventually finding jobs and leaving welfare. LEAP relies on the education system to provide all services to teens other than case management, transportation, and child care assistance.

Since the program began operations in 1989, the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) has been evaluating it in 12 counties throughout Ohio. Using an experimental research design, nearly 10,000 teenage parents were randomly assigned either to a program or a control group; the differences in the education and economic performances of these two groups reflect the impact of LEAP's combination of bonuses, sanctions, and support services. Thus far, two reports have evaluated LEAP's operation and impact on education outcomes.[1] Future reports, scheduled to be completed in 1995 and 1996, will update the education findings and assess LEAP's longer-term effects on employment, welfare receipt, family income, and other outcomes.

The aim of the Cleveland Student Parent Demonstration was to assess the effectiveness of enhanced services beyond LEAP. For this study, additional services were provided to approximately half the LEAP teens in Cleveland, who had been assigned to six "enhanced" high schools in the city (the enhanced group), while LEAP teens assigned to the other six "regular" schools (the regular group) were eligible only for regular services. The additional services available to LEAP teens in the

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[1]The first report (Bloom et al., 1991) addressed the early implementation of LEAP. The second (Bloom et al., 1993) presented estimates of LEAP's bonus and sanction rates and its short-term education impact (primarily on school enrollment and attendance).

enhanced group were of two kinds: school-based — including intensive case management by staff stationed in schools, in-school child care, and instruction in parenting and life skills — for teens attending enhanced high schools; or community-based — including outreach, special GED preparation classes, and parenting and life skills instruction — for teens who, though assigned to one of these enhanced schools, did not attend regularly. By including both school-based services for teens who were attending school regularly and community-based services for teens who were not complying with LEAP, the demonstration was designed to provide most LEAP teens in the enhanced group with additional services.[2]

The Cleveland Student Parent Demonstration used a quasi-experimental design, in contrast to the experimental, random assignment research design used in the evaluation of the LEAP program. In a quasi-experimental design, two similar, preexisting groups are identified as the research groups for the study. For the test of enhanced services, these two groups were LEAP teens assigned to the enhanced high schools (which offered additional services) and LEAP teens assigned to the regular high schools (which offered only regular services). The difference in education outcomes between these two groups serves as the estimate of the effect of the enhanced services. Analysis suggests that these two groups are well matched and should, therefore, provide a reliable test of the effectiveness of the enhancements. Nonetheless, due to potential differences between the research groups in a quasi-experimental design, these impact estimates must be interpreted with more caution than estimates based on a random assignment research design.

The research in Cleveland indicates that LEAP is a viable, low-cost policy approach that significantly improves school completion. Despite operational problems during the first two years, LEAP's financial incentive structure affected virtually all eligible teens, with more than three quarters of teens earning bonuses and two thirds qualifying for grant reductions. As seen in Table 1.1, LEAP increased teens' receipt of high school diplomas and GEDs by 5.6 percentage points after three years. LEAP's impact was particularly evident (8.8 percentage points after three years) for teens who were enrolled in school when they entered the program. These may be conservative estimates of the LEAP

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[2]Two categories of enhanced teens were not covered by these services: (1) teens who regularly attended adult education/GED programs other than the enhanced GED programs; and (2) teens who were exempted from the LEAP school-attendance requirement and did not attend school or an enhanced GED program. As discussed in Chapter 3, LEAP teens were exempted from the attendance requirement during the last seven months of pregnancy, while caring for a child under three months old, when child care or transportation was unavailable, and for other specified reasons.

TABLE 1.1

THIRD-YEAR IMPACTS OF LEAP ON HIGH SCHOOL AND GED COMPLETION FOR TEENS IN THE CLEVELAND SAMPLE, BY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT STATUS AT RANDOM ASSIGNMENT

Subgroup and Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference	Percentage Change
All teens				
Completed (%)				
High school	14.0	11.2	2.9	26%
GED	7.1	4.3	2.8 *	64%
High school or GED	21.1	15.5	5.6 **	36%
Sample size	1,392	312		
Enrolled in school at random assignment				
Completed (%)				
High school	23.7	18.1	5.6 *	31%
GED	5.6	2.3	3.3 *	142%
High school or GED	29.2	20.4	8.8 **	43%
Sample size	771	174		
Not enrolled in school at random assignment				
Completed (%)				
High school	2.2	1.5	0.8	51%
GED	8.9	7.1	1.8	26%
High school or GED	11.1	8.6	2.6	30%
Sample size	621	138		

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheets, automated school records from the Cleveland public school district, and automated GED testing data from the Ohio Department of Education.

NOTES: "Completed GED" refers to passing the GED test.

Sample members are considered enrolled in school if they reported being enrolled in a high school, junior high school, or GED program.

Differences, as well as program and control group means, are regression-adjusted to correct for slight differences between program and control groups in baseline characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

model's potential, because most sample members entered the program during the time it was experiencing start-up problems.

In addition, the research indicates that enhanced services added to LEAP's effect on teens' school completion rate (as well as to program costs). The results suggest that the enhanced services increased high school and GED completion by about 2 percentage points after three years. The full set of enhanced services was not in place for a year or more after many teens first entered LEAP. In addition, once in place, the enhanced services reached a smaller proportion of eligible teens than expected. Less than half of LEAP teens in the enhanced group attended school enough to receive any school-based services, and many of those who failed to attend school did not receive any community-based services. Among LEAP teens who did attend school, the enhanced services significantly increased the likelihood of their earning a diploma or a GED. Because of the late start of some enhanced services and because the additional services did not reach all teens in the enhanced group, the results presented in this report probably understate the potential effectiveness of additional services.

Each of the following six chapters focuses on a particular aspect of this attempt to find answers to the ongoing problem of teenage parents on welfare:

- *Chapter 2:* **Why are teenage parents as a group important to welfare policy?** At any given point in time, parents under the age of 20 make up a small fraction of all cases receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the nation's largest cash welfare program. However, teen parents receiving AFDC are much more likely than other recipients to stay on welfare a very long time. For this reason, welfare cases that begin with a teen birth account for more than half of all AFDC expenditures, making this a critically important segment of the welfare population. However, there is limited evidence about which policy approaches work best in promoting teens' self-sufficiency.

- *Chapter 3:* **How effective has LEAP been so far?** Chapter 3 summarizes the research findings on LEAP that were released last year.[3] These preliminary results were promising. The program's financial incentive structure was implemented relatively smoothly throughout Ohio, and at least one bonus or sanction was directed to almost all eligible teens (93 percent) within an 18-month period. LEAP improved school retention, substantially reducing the likelihood that initially enrolled teens would drop out of school during their first year in the program. LEAP also induced a significant number of dropouts to enroll in a school or a GED preparation program. These enrollment impacts appeared to be translating into small effects on high school and GED completion, based on the limited data available at that time. The findings were relatively consistent across counties, although in Cuyahoga County, where Cleveland is located,

[3]Bloom et al., 1993.

LEAP operated with more start-up problems and recorded smaller impacts on school enrollment than in other counties.

- *Chapter 4:* **How has LEAP succeeded in Cleveland?** The additional data collection and analysis in Cleveland permit an updating of the LEAP results, presented in Chapter 4. The most important of these new findings is that LEAP's combination of bonuses, sanctions, and support services increased the percentage of eligible teens who completed a high school diploma or GED within three years of entering the program from 15.5 percent to 21.1 percent, a statistically significant impact of 5.6 percentage points (see Table 1.1). LEAP's effect was much larger for teens who were enrolled in school when they entered the program than for teens who entered as dropouts. Among initially enrolled teens, LEAP increased the proportion completing high school or earning a GED by a statistically significant 8.8 percentage points (from 20.4 to 29.2 percent). In contrast, among teens not initially enrolled, LEAP increased completion by 2.6 percentage points (from 8.6 to 11.1 percent), an effect that is not statistically significant.

  LEAP's effect statewide may be different from its effect in Cleveland. The next LEAP report (scheduled for 1995) will examine the program's effect on high school and GED completion in seven Ohio counties.

  Based on data collected in Cleveland, the direct cost of LEAP per eligible teen is estimated as $971 (in fiscal year 1993 dollars). This cost corresponds to the entire period of program eligibility, which, depending on the teen, could last as little as a month and as much as eight years (the average was a little less than two years). This estimate excludes the indirect cost to schools that results from LEAP's effect on school enrollment.

- *Chapter 5:* **What has been learned from the implementation of the enhanced school- and community-based services?** The evidence discussed in Chapter 5 suggests that the school- and community-based services, which together cost $1,965 per teen, had different accomplishments and encountered different problems. The school-based services, which were directed to teens who attended school, were implemented relatively easily. In particular, since the school-based case managers monitored students' attendance and performance closely, they were able to quickly follow up on any problems and help teens finish school.

  The community-based outreach effort, which targeted teens who never attended school or who dropped out, proved more difficult: about a third of the teens referred for this service could not be located; communication with the two thirds who were contacted was often limited or sporadic; and many of the teens who were successfully contacted posed a special challenge (for example, many had been out of school for a long time). The enhanced GED programs managed to enroll a substantial share of out-of-school teens, and to achieve surprisingly high attendance rates, but most enrollees entered with poor skills and relatively few completed a GED.

- *Chapter 6:* **To what extent do these enhanced services improve teens' educational performance over LEAP's efforts alone?** The findings in Cleveland indicate that the effect of enhanced services on school completion — beyond LEAP's own effect — was relatively small for the eligible population as a whole. LEAP's completion impact in the third year after random assignment was about 8 percentage points when combined with the additional services, compared with a 6 percentage point impact for LEAP alone. As with LEAP, the enhanced services appear to have had more effect on initially enrolled teens than on school dropouts.

  An important reason for the small additional effect of the enhanced services is that many teens did not receive the services. For example, the school-based services were provided only to teens who attended high school. However, only 43 percent of LEAP teens attended school at least 20 days in any given school year during the three years examined. Among the teens who did attend, the effect of the enhanced services was substantially larger and statistically significant.

- *Chapter 7:* **How important is the improvement in education outcomes achieved by LEAP and the enhanced services?** The overall results in Cleveland are encouraging, suggesting that LEAP's impact extended beyond enrollment to completion, and that the enhancements added to LEAP's effect. However, the success of both LEAP and the enhanced services appears to have varied substantially by initial enrollment status. The results are very encouraging for teens who were already enrolled in school at the time their eligibility for LEAP was established, but disappointing for school dropouts.

  On their own, 20 percent of initially enrolled teens earned a high school diploma or a GED within three years. The LEAP program substantially improved this performance, increasing overall completion rates from 20 to 29 percent. Further, most of these additional completions were high school graduations. In addition, the enhanced services appear to have increased school completion beyond the effect of LEAP alone, among these teens.

  In contrast, without intervention fewer than 9 percent of dropouts received a diploma or GED within three years. Neither LEAP nor the enhanced services significantly improved this outcome. Moreover, because the dropouts' behavior was not altered appreciably, their families endured a substantial reduction in welfare grants resulting from LEAP sanctions. Fortunately, LEAP, operating as an ongoing program, will encounter a smaller proportion of teens entering the program as dropouts than it did during the period it has been evaluated, particularly if enhanced services are available. If teens were exposed to LEAP from the point they first had a child and went on welfare, as would be the case in an ongoing program, fewer of them would already be dropouts and it is likely that more would be encouraged by LEAP to finish school or earn a GED.

A distressing aspect of the findings in Cleveland is that, with or without LEAP, few teen parents finished high school or received a GED. While the low completion rates partly reflect limitations of the study — teens were not followed beyond three school years, and graduations from schools outside Cleveland were not counted — they also speak to the difficulty of encouraging this important segment of the welfare population to reach a key milestone on the road to economic self-sufficiency. While LEAP and the enhanced services together had a substantial impact on school completion, more than three quarters of the teen parents who were exposed to them still did not obtain a diploma or a GED during the period evaluated.

The results in Cleveland are, consequently, mixed. On the one hand, LEAP has been shown to be a workable and relatively inexpensive program that significantly improves the school performance of teen parents on welfare. Further, given earlier findings, it is likely that LEAP's impact on school completion in other Ohio communities will be larger than it was in Cleveland. Moreover, the results suggest that improved services in schools and in the community can increase the effect of LEAP, and there is evidence that the services could potentially achieve even more than has been documented in Cleveland.

On the other hand, the package of financial incentives and services implemented in Cleveland lessened, but certainly did not solve, the problem of teen parents' economic hardship and welfare dependency. The package significantly reduced the proportion of teen parents who did not finish their schooling, but that fraction was still large. Moreover, it remains to be seen how much LEAP's effect on school performance will translate into improved employment, increased income, and reduced welfare receipt. Future LEAP reports will speak to this important point.

CHAPTER 2

TEENAGE PARENTS AND WELFARE POLICY

The demonstration project in Cleveland was an attempt to develop a workable policy to help teenage parents continue their education and break the costly cycle of welfare dependence and poverty. Extensive research indicates that early childbearing is harmful to both adolescent parents and their children. Studies have shown that teenage childbearing typically sets off a chain of events that leads to economic hardship and welfare dependence in later life. The first link in this chain is interrupted schooling. A pregnant high school student is more than 11 times as likely to drop out of school as another female student of the same age.[1] While some teenage mothers who have dropped out return eventually and finish their education, motherhood decreases the likelihood of their ever graduating from high school: only 42 percent of women who give birth before the age of 18 (including dropouts and non-dropouts) graduate from high school or receive a GED by the age of 20, compared with 84 percent of all women.[2]

The connection between early childbearing and dropping out of school is complex. Some teenagers who have children may feel pressure to leave school, and others may have difficulty performing their schoolwork once they become parents. Poor students are disproportionately likely to have children and to drop out of school when they do. In addition, young mothers who drop out of school are likely to have additional children.[3] The link between interrupted schooling and economic hardship is more straightforward: teens who fail to complete school lack the education credentials often required for jobs and further education and thus either cannot find jobs or, if they do, cannot command a wage that will support them. The end result is poverty.[4] This link is only becoming stronger, as the large gap in earnings between females who finish school and those who do not continues to grow.[5]

Teenage mothers are clearly at high risk of being on welfare for many years, although they have other characteristics that also help account for their economic circumstances.[6] About half of teenage mothers receive AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) at some point during the five years

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[1]Anderson, 1993.
[2]Ribar, 1992.
[3]Rindfuss, St. John, and Bumpass, 1984.
[4]Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, and Morgan, 1987.
[5]Levy and Murnane, 1992.
[6]Nord et al., 1992.

after they first give birth;[7] and more than a third of teen mothers who have been on welfare receive AFDC benefits in 10 or more years.[8] As a result, even though teenage parents make up only 8 percent of the AFDC caseload at any point in time, families started by teenage mothers accounted for more than half the total expenditures on AFDC, Food Stamps, and Medicaid in 1990.[9]

I. Current Policy Approaches

Two broad strategies to enhance the self-sufficiency of welfare-dependent teenage parents have emerged during the last two decades: (1) programs offering services, beyond what are typically available in schools, that are designed to meet the special needs of teenage parents; and (2) programs that use financial incentives to encourage adolescent parents to go to school and to use these other services.

A. Service Programs

Numerous service programs — most developed under the auspices of schools, health agencies, and community-based organizations — have been operated since the 1970s. Many program administrators have concluded that teenage parents' multiple needs cannot be addressed by a single type of service, so numerous programs have provided multiple services: education, health services (such as family planning), life management training (for example, parenting education), employability development, and other social services. Although the philosophies of these programs have varied, all of them have made participation voluntary, and most have focused on improving the educational attainment of teenage parents.

Evidence of the effectiveness of these programs is limited,[10] but the results for a national demonstration program for very young mothers on welfare, Project Redirection, indicate it had beneficial long-term effects on both the employment and welfare receipt of teen parents and on the

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[7]U.S. Congress, Congressional Budget Office, 1990, p. xvi.

[8]Maxfield and Rucci, 1986.

[9]Moore, 1993.

[10]A multitude of school-based dropout prevention programs have been directed to pregnant and parenting teens, as well as other "at risk" students; but there is little solid evidence of their effectiveness (see Mann, 1986, pp. 312-13). Similarly, numerous voluntary-participation programs for pregnant and parenting teens have been offered in other settings, but few have been rigorously evaluated. Project Redirection and the New Chance Demonstration, discussed here, are exceptions, as is the JOBSTART Demonstration, for which teen parents made up more than a quarter of the youth population served (see Cave et al., 1993).

well-being of their children.[11] In current dollars, this program cost approximately $6,000 per adolescent parent. Another demonstration program providing comprehensive services to somewhat older adolescent parents, New Chance, has operated in 16 sites across the country. The average cost of operating New Chance, excluding child care, was about $6,500 per experimental. Child care costs averaged an additional $2,600 per experimental. Although this program has had little short-term impact on employment or welfare, it has substantially increased educational attainment, which may ultimately have a positive effect on income and self-sufficiency.[12]

B. Financial Incentives

Recent initiatives developed by state welfare agencies have used financial incentives to promote the self-sufficiency of teenage parents. The agencies had previously used such incentives, with well-documented results, to encourage AFDC adults to participate in employment-focused activities.[13] In these welfare-to-work programs, individuals who failed to comply with program participation requirements have been subject to a sanction, which reduced their AFDC grant for a fixed time. Until recently, however, teenage parents generally were not subject to participation requirements, because federal legislation exempts women whose children are younger than age 3.

During the late 1980s, welfare agencies began to extend this approach to teenage parents. The first large-scale use of financial incentives as a mechanism for promoting the self-sufficiency of teenagers was Wisconsin's Learnfare program, which started in 1987. All AFDC recipients between the ages of 13 and 19 (including those who are t parents) have been required to regularly attend school or an alternative program leading to a high school diploma or a GED credential in order for their families to continue to qualify for their full AFDC grant. Those who do not attend school or an alternative program are subject to sanctions. An evaluation indicated the program has been ineffective, but those results have been questioned.[14]

The Teenage Parent Demonstration began operations in Camden and Newark, New Jersey, and in South Chicago, at about the same time Learnfare started. Teen parents have been required to participate in one or more activities, including education. Failure to comply has again resulted in sanctions, which continue until compliance occurs. The cost of administering the program's incentives

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[11]Polit, Quint, and Riccio, 1988.

[12]Quint et al., 1994.

[13]Gueron and Pauly, 1991.

[14]See Pawasarat, Quinn, and Stetzer, 1992. An evaluation of Learnfare, using a random assignment design, is currently under way (see State of Wisconsin, 1992).

and providing case management has been $2,200 per teenage parent, which includes $800 expended on community-provided services (this excludes the cost of regular high school programs). In contrast to Learnfare, the evaluation results for this program have been somewhat encouraging.[15]

Ohio's LEAP program, which is targeted to pregnant and parenting teenagers who receive welfare (on either their own AFDC case or someone else's) and have not completed high school or received a GED, has been operating since 1989. Unlike Learnfare and the Teenage Parent Demonstration, LEAP's incentive structure includes cash bonuses, which are paid when a teen enrolls in school and then each month she meets a school attendance requirement. LEAP sanctions teens who do not cooperate with LEAP or fail to attend school regularly without a valid reason. The program also provides case management and offers teens financial assistance with child care and transportation while they are attending school. The cost of LEAP, excluding the costs of education (incurred by schools and adult education programs), has been $330 per eligible teen per year.

LEAP relies heavily on financial incentives. These incentives are distinct from those in most other programs, because LEAP provides bonus payments in addition to penalties (see Chapter 3). The cash assistance paid to a teen who attends school regularly can be more than 50 percent higher than that paid to a teen who is not attending school: for example, a teen who has one child and attended regularly received $336 a month during the period covered by this analysis, compared with $212 if she did not attend without a valid reason. LEAP consequently represents a different test of financial incentives than either the Teenage Parent Demonstration or Learnfare. Moreover, in financial incentive programs such as these, which rely on sanctions alone, a substantial portion of their eligible population may be exempted from penalties and thus not subject to the incentives. In contrast, due to bonus payments, LEAP's incentives are applied, at least in part, to virtually everyone who is eligible for the program.

II. Finding an Effective Intervention

Effective strategies for helping teenage parents have proved elusive and potentially very costly. In designing interventions to have the best possible effect on the teenage parent population at the lowest possible cost, policymakers have to make difficult choices between possible approaches:

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[15]Maynard, Nicholson, and Rangarajan, 1993.

- **Broad coverage versus targeting.** A key choice is between providing a broad group of teenage parents with a relatively inexpensive policy treatment, or targeting a more costly treatment to a subset of the teen population deemed to be especially in need.

- **Services versus financial incentives**. Policymakers must decide how much of their limited resources to invest in new services for teen parents as opposed to financial or other incentives for teens to use existing services.

- **Voluntary versus mandatory participation.** Participation has only recently been mandated in programs for teen parents on welfare. Mandates of this kind cost money to enforce and imply broad service coverage (i.e., a mandate compels a large fraction of the population to participate).

- **Education versus other services.** Some programs focus on helping teens to complete their high school education, while others also provide employment-related or other services. A key advantage of education, aside from its demonstrated ability to increase employment and earnings, is that it is available to all teenagers through the public education system. In contrast, other services may involve substantial additional expenditures.

Moreover, little of the available evidence speaks to the question of which combination of program features works best for teen parents. It is not an easy question to answer through research since the net effect of any social program is the difference between the experience of participants in a program and that of those same individuals *without* it. Thus, a number of studies and advisory panels have concluded that the creation of program and control groups, as part of a classical experiment using random assignment, is in most cases the best way to obtain accurate and unbiased estimates of the behavior of people with and without a program.

A typical random assignment experiment, in comparing the outcomes for individuals assigned to one program and one control group, reflects the changes brought about by the full program, not the separate effects of each of that program's components. For this reason, this type of evaluation is sometimes said to treat a program like a "black box," making it impossible to confidently identify the factors responsible for its success or failure or to assess the relative effectiveness of its different elements. As Heckman argues, "In order to use (random assignment) to evaluate the effects of the various stages of a multistage program, it is necessary to randomize at each stage."[16] Similarly, assessing social policies that involve several potential options entails one randomization for each option. This could be prohibitively costly and time-consuming. Researchers have often tried to draw

[16]Heckman, 1992, p. 203.

inferences about important factors and program features by comparing impacts across programs and program sites, which inevitably entails weighing competing explanations for impact differences.[17]

A more complex random assignment design would, in going beyond the typical two-group design, assign individuals eligible for a certain program to several different treatment options as well as to a control group. If assignment to multiple research groups is successfully done, and the treatment options provided to each group are successfully differentiated, the resulting research can yield compelling evidence on the relative effectiveness of different program approaches.[18] However, this type of assessment is challenging under the best of circumstances and may be extremely difficult to implement in some settings, including one in which different public school services are offered within a single school district. The demonstration project in Cleveland sought to overcome this difficulty by using a quasi-experimental research design based on existing student assignment policies used by the Cleveland public schools (see Chapters 5 and 6). Unfortunately, this approach is not as reliable as a random assignment experiment.

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[17]See, for example, Riccio, Friedlander, and Freedman, 1994.

[18]These more complex experimental designs have been used in studying some welfare-to-work programs (see Long, 1988; and Goldman, Friedlander, and Long, 1986).

CHAPTER 3

THE LEAP PROGRAM IN OHIO

The statewide LEAP evaluation has already released much information about the program's operation and effectiveness. This summary of these findings will serve both to place Cleveland within a larger program context and to indicate the areas in which the Cleveland demonstration provides new information.

I. The Operation of LEAP

Throughout Ohio, participation in LEAP is required of all pregnant women and custodial parents (almost all of whom are women) who are under 20 years of age, are receiving AFDC, and do not have a high school diploma or a GED. This group includes teens who receive assistance through someone else's AFDC case (usually their mother's), as well as those who head their own cases.

Under LEAP's rules, all eligible teens are required to enroll (or remain enrolled) in and regularly attend a school or education program leading to a high school diploma or a GED. LEAP uses a unique incentive structure, combining bonuses and sanctions, to encourage compliance with this mandate. The bonus payments, each of which amounts to $62, are for either enrollment or attendance:

- **Enrollment bonuses** are payments made (1) when a teen first verifies that she is enrolled in a school or education program, and (2) at the beginning of subsequent academic years as long as she remains enrolled.

- **Attendance bonuses** are earned for every month in which a teen meets LEAP's school attendance requirement — for high school students, two or fewer unexcused absences and four or fewer total absences.

Sanctions, which reduce an eligible teen's family's monthly AFDC grant by $62, are required for her failure in three areas: assessment, enrollment, and attendance:

- **Assessment sanctions** are administered when a teen fails to come to (1) a scheduled assessment meeting (the event that commences LEAP participation) or (2) a scheduled reassessment meeting (which occurs prior to the start of subsequent school years). These sanctions remain in effect (and monthly grants continue to be reduced) until the teen appears for the meeting. Because eligibility for LEAP is usually verified at the assessment meeting, these sanctions can be applied to teens before eligibility is confirmed.

- **Enrollment sanctions** reduce a grant when a teen has been assessed and either (1) fails to enroll in a qualifying school or education program or (2) drops out of school. The sanction remains in place until the teen provides proof of enrollment or becomes exempt from or ineligible for LEAP.

- **Attendance sanctions** are requested for each month in which an enrolled teen does not meet LEAP's school attendance requirement and lacks an acceptable reason for this failure.

In accordance with an individual teen's compliance (or noncompliance) with these rules, her LEAP case manager issues a request for a bonus or a sanction.[1] This request is carried out by the welfare (Income Maintenance) staff. Because teens have several opportunities to provide evidence of "good cause" for absences that schools consider unexcused, there is a three-month lag between the month of attendance and the corresponding bonus or sanction (for example, poor attendance in October triggers a sanction in January). A teen may also be temporarily exempted from the LEAP requirements if she is in the last seven months of a pregnancy, caring for a child under three months, or unable to obtain transportation or child care, or for other specified reasons.

This system of bonuses and sanctions can substantially change a participant's income. During most of the period covered by this study, a teen living on her own with one child (the most common situation) was eligible for a monthly AFDC grant of $274. A bonus raised her grant to $336, a sanction reduced it to $212. Thus, the total difference in AFDC payments for a teen who enrolled in school and attended regularly, and one who failed to enroll without good reason, was $124 per month.

II. The LEAP Evaluation

MDRC's evaluation of the LEAP program was designed to provide reliable evidence about its operation and impact. The analysis of program operations has covered LEAP's institutional structure in the 12 counties included in the evaluation, as well as eligible teens' experience of the program. In accordance with the project's experimental research design, the program's impact was estimated by comparing two randomly selected groups of eligible teens: teenage parents in 12 counties (including Cuyahoga County, where Cleveland is located) were randomly assigned to a program group, which was subject to the LEAP incentive structure, or a control group, which was not. Of the approximately 10,000 eligible teen parents, approximately 2,300 were in Cleveland; all were assigned to these two

[1]Teens who exceed the allowed number of total absences in a month, but not the allowed number of unexcused absences, receive neither a bonus nor a sanction for that month.

groups between July 1989 and September 1991. The program and control groups are being compared in terms of short-term education outcomes — school and adult education program enrollment, attendance, progress, and completion — and of longer-term outcomes, including employment and welfare receipt.

The data on the teen parents in this sample collected for this and earlier reports are from the following sources:

- LEAP records on program participation, bonuses, and grant reductions.
- School and GED program records of teens' enrollment, attendance, academic progress, and receipt of high school diplomas and GED certificates.
- A survey of program and control group members — conducted at approximately 4 to 21 months after random assignment — that asked teens about their education, families, child care and living arrangements, and attitudes.
- "Focus group" discussions, with groups of between 4 and 20 teens, that provided a fuller understanding of teens' different experiences and reactions to the incentives and services they were given.
- Field research on the operation of LEAP, schools and GED programs, and, in Cleveland, the enhanced school and community organization services.

There also were several types of data collected only in Cleveland; these data will be described at appropriate points in the discussion to follow.

III. Evaluation Findings Prior to This Report

The last report on the LEAP evaluation[2] drew several conclusions about the statewide performance of LEAP and about county differences in program effectiveness. First, the program was implemented successfully, despite some start-up problems. By its third year, LEAP's operations were relatively smooth. However, because the evaluation began at the same time LEAP started, most of the teens in the evaluation experienced LEAP at least partly when the financial incentives operated least efficiently. Given that LEAP's operations have improved over time, the impact results in both the previous report and this report probably represent a conservative estimate of the LEAP model's potential.

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[2]Bloom et al., 1993.

Second, despite its early implementation problems, LEAP incorporated most eligible teens in its incentive structure: 93 percent of eligible teens were scheduled for at least one bonus or sanction during their first 18 months of program eligibility. Seventy-five percent of eligible teens earned at least one bonus, and 56 percent were slated for at least one sanction (many teens earned both bonuses and sanctions). Thirteen percent of LEAP teens recorded at least four sanction requests and no bonuses, a result that has raised concerns. For a number of legitimate reasons, teens did not qualify for grant adjustments every month; about half were scheduled for six or more actions over the 18 months. In addition, especially during the first year of the program, many of the sanctions requested by the LEAP staff did not actually lead to grant reductions because of administrative problems.

Third, the direct cost of LEAP was $330 per eligible teen per year. Most of this cost was attributable to case management. The cost of implementing the financial incentive structure was negligible, because almost as many sanctions were requested as bonuses.

Fourth, LEAP had an impact on both school retention and return (see Table 3.1, based on the survey response of 1,188 teens in the program and the control groups). Among teens who were already enrolled in school when they became eligible for LEAP (about half of all teens), 61.3 percent of the program group and 51.1 percent of the control group remained enrolled continuously (or graduated) during the 12 months after entering LEAP.[3] This difference — 10.3 percentage points (after rounding) — is a statistically significant increase in school retention.

Among teens who were dropouts when they entered LEAP, 46.8 percent of program group members and 33.4 percent of controls enrolled in a high school or adult education program at some point during the following 12 months. This 13.4 percentage point impact on school return is also statistically significant. Nevertheless, even with the LEAP incentives and penalties, more than half the dropouts never returned to school during the first year.

In addition to promoting high school retention and inducing some dropouts to return to these schools, LEAP also improved the attendance of teens enrolled in high school (not shown in the table). In contrast, program group teens who enrolled in adult education programs attended those programs somewhat *less* than controls. However, because many more program group than control group teens enrolled in adult education programs, the former group attended a greater number of days.

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[3]Enrollment for at least 10 of the 12 months is considered continuous because some enrolled teens did not report enrollment during the summer months.

TABLE 3.1

LEAP's FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS ON SCHOOL AND ADULT EDUCATION ENROLLMENT

Subgroup and Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
Teens who were initially enrolled in a school or program			
Enrolled (or completed) 10 or more months in (%)			
High school or adult education	61.3	51.1	10.3 ***
High school	56.2	46.9	9.3 **
Adult education	5.4	3.5	1.9
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or adult education	8.3	7.3	0.9 **
High school	7.3	6.6	0.7 *
Adult education	0.9	0.7	0.3
Teens who were initially not enrolled in a school or program			
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school or adult education	46.8	33.4	13.4 ***
High school	20.4	16.2	4.3
Adult education	28.5	17.4	11.1 ***
Enrolled (or completed) 10 or more months in (%)			
High school or adult education	17.5	8.4	9.0 ***
High school	10.1	4.9	5.2 **
Adult education	7.3	3.5	3.8 *
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or adult education	3.2	1.9	1.3 ***
High school	1.5	1.0	0.5 *
Adult education	1.7	0.9	0.8 ***

SOURCE: Bloom et al., 1993.

NOTES: This table is based on the survey responses of 1,188 teens in the program and the control groups. "Completed" denotes having graduated high school or received a GED. A teen who achieved either outcome is counted as "enrolled" or "already completed" for the month of graduation (or GED receipt) and all subsequent months. For example, a teen who was enrolled in month 1, and then graduated in month 4, is counted as enrolled (or completed) for all 12 months.

The proportion ever enrolled in high school and the proportion ever enrolled in adult education programs may sum to more than the proportion ever enrolled in high school or adult education because teens may have enrolled in both types of education.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Finally, early evidence on school completion indicated that LEAP's success in promoting high school enrollment and retention was translating into small increases in high school graduation. In addition, the program had already produced a small but statistically significant increase in the proportion of teens taking and passing the GED test. However, this evidence for LEAP's impact on graduation and GED receipt was necessarily preliminary because a substantial proportion of the teens studied in the analysis were not old enough to have graduated or obtained a GED during the study period.

These findings were relatively consistent across counties, although Cuyahoga County performed somewhat worse than the other counties. Its start-up problems were the most serious of the seven counties included in the last report, a result that is not surprising in view of the fact that Cuyahoga had by far the largest LEAP caseload. In particular, especially during the program's first year and a half, it did not carry out a substantial proportion of the grant reductions that teens' failures had warranted; and sanction requests were not acted upon for several weeks in 1992 when the program was converting to a new computer system statewide. Prior to that development, the LEAP staff had to send paper forms to welfare workers requesting specific grant changes, and these changes were often not made. In addition, LEAP's impact on school enrollment in Cuyahoga was the least of the seven counties included in the analysis. Therefore, it is possible that the program's impact on high school and GED completion in Cleveland, discussed in the next chapter, is smaller than in other locations in Ohio.

CHAPTER 4

THE LEAP PROGRAM IN CLEVELAND

This report of LEAP's operations and impacts in Cleveland from 1989 through 1993 updates the statewide report discussed in the last chapter. By 1993, the operational problems that plagued Cuyahoga County during the first two academic years after LEAP started — 1989-90 and 1990-91 — were largely resolved. First, a sophisticated statewide computerized management information system, which was implemented in 1992, helped the county improve its operations substantially: now, virtually all sanction requests are carried out. Second, all program procedures are now well established, so that program monitoring of school enrollment and attendance, as well as the other functions of LEAP case managers, are completed more quickly and predictably than during the early years of program operations.

The direct cost of LEAP in Cleveland, during the four-year period covered by this analysis, was $971 per eligible teen (or $537 per teen per year).[1] The cost of the program's case management has been $651 per teen (this includes the cost of transportation reimbursement to LEAP teens) and child care has cost an additional $358. Because the number of bonuses teens earned was less than the sanctions incurred (see below), LEAP's incentive structure has had no net cost; indeed, it has actually reduced expenditures by $38 per teen.[2] LEAP's indirect costs, resulting from its effects on school and adult education program enrollment,[3] will be estimated as part of the benefit-cost analysis of LEAP in the final evaluation report, to be completed in 1996.

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[1]On average, the length of LEAP eligibility has been 21.7 months; this is the reason that the cost per teen is almost twice the cost per teen per year. The per-year cost estimate of $537 (in fiscal year 1993 dollars) is higher than the preliminary estimate of $330 (in fiscal year 1991 dollars) per teen per year presented in the last report on LEAP (Bloom et al., 1993). The main reason for the difference is that the estimated use of LEAP-funded child care assistance was much higher (15 percent of the LEAP mothers were estimated to have received the assistance) in Cuyahoga County for the period of 1989-93 than the estimated use statewide for 1989-91 (8 percent).

[2]During the first three years of LEAP's operations, when its staff's bonus and sanction requests were carried out by hand by Income Maintenance workers, there were modest, but tangible administrative costs associated with LEAP's incentive structure beyond those for the LEAP staff. These costs have become negligible with the sophisticated new computer system – although its development and implementation was costly.

[3]For example, as discussed below, LEAP increased the percentage of eligible teens who attended high school by 5 percentage points in each of the first two years following random assignment, and 2 percentage points in the third year. Given that the cost of high school per enrolled student in 1992-93 was $6,369 (according to the Ohio Department of Education), this effect produced an indirect cost of more than $700 per eligible teen.

I. The Research Sample in Cleveland

The findings about the Cleveland program's grant adjustment and impact can best be understood in the context of both the way the sample used in the analysis was defined and created and its demographic characteristics.

A. Defining the Sample

The initial sample included all teens who were both randomly assigned as part of the statewide evaluation of the LEAP program and identified as living within the Cleveland city limits at the time of random assignment. As part of the LEAP evaluation, teens were randomly assigned to the program or control groups from July 1989 though September 1991. This initial sample contained 2,289 teens.

Two groups of teens were excluded from the initial sample for the analysis presented in this report. First, teens who entered the sample during the last three months of random assignment (July, August, and September 1991) were omitted from the sample, due to inadequate follow-up information (less than the minimum of three academic years). This restriction reduced the sample from 2,289 to 2,128 teens.

Second, teens born before September 1, 1971, were omitted from the analysis. This restriction was made to ensure that all sample members had an opportunity of being exposed to all the enhanced services in Cleveland, which were not fully in place until April 1, 1991 (see Chapters 5 and 6). Sample members born in 1970 or early 1971, having turned 20 by this date and thus aged out of LEAP, were never exposed to the full set of enhanced services. With the sample restricted to teens born on or after September 1, 1971, all sample members could have had at least five months of exposure to the full set of enhanced services. In addition, the excluded older teens were exposed to LEAP only during its start-up phase when, as indicated earlier, the program was experiencing operational problems and may have been less effective. As a result, the impact estimates for this restricted LEAP sample should more closely reflect the effects of LEAP as an ongoing program.

The birth-date restriction reduced the sample from 2,128 to 1,704. The final Cleveland sample of 1,704 contains 1,392 program group members and 312 control group members.

B. Demographic Characteristics

Data on the initial demographic characteristics of the Cleveland sample for both the program and the control groups (see Table 4.1) were gathered as part of a brief baseline survey (the Teen Parent Information Sheet) conducted by the LEAP staff at the time teens were randomly assigned.

TABLE 4.1

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF TEENS IN THE CLEVELAND SAMPLE AT LEAP RANDOM ASSIGNMENT

Characteristic	Average or Percent
Age (years) (%)	
15 or less	12.6
16	18.4
17	36.3
18	28.8
19	4.0
Average age (years)	17.4
Gender (%)	
Female	99.5
Schooling status (%)	
Enrolled in school	55.5
Out of school less than 1 year	21.2
Out of school at least 1 year but less than 2 years	14.4
Out of school 2 years or more	8.9
Average number of months since last attended school (non-enrolled teens only)	15.6
Average highest grade completed	9.4
AFDC case status (%)	
Head of own AFDC case	46.2
On parent's AFDC case	47.1
On another's AFDC case	6.6
Ethnicity (%)	
Black	76.1
White	18.9
Hispanic	4.4
Other	0.6
Marital status (%)	
Single, never married	95.7
Currently married	2.8
Divorced, separated, or widowed	1.5
Number of children (%)	
0 (a)	9.6
1	78.7
2 or more	11.7
Average number of children	1.0

(continued)

TABLE 4.1 (continued)

Characteristic	Average or Percent
Average age of youngest child (b) (months)	9.9
Average age of oldest child (b) (months)	12.3
Prior-year earnings (%)	
Any earnings during the prior 12 months	6.9
Sample size	1,704

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheets.

NOTES: This table includes teens in both the program and the control groups.
Distributions may not add up to 100.0 percent because of rounding.
(a) In September 1990, LEAP eligibility was extended to teens pregnant with their first child.
(b) For those with children only.

Most teens entered the sample when they were 17 or 18 years old, while about a third entered the sample when they were 16 or less. The large majority (88.3 percent) entered LEAP with only one child or when they were pregnant with their first child. However, many of these teens may have had additional children after entering LEAP. The vast majority of sample members are female (99.5 percent) and had never married when they were randomly assigned (95.7 percent). Three quarters of the sample are black, and about one fifth white.

Over half of the teens were enrolled in school at the time they were randomly assigned, while about a quarter had been out of school a year or more. Just under half were on their own AFDC case when they entered the sample. Few reported any earnings in the year prior to random assignment.

C. Age at the End of Follow-up

Follow-up lasted for three academic years, counting the academic year in which a sample member was randomly assigned. The average length of follow-up was 2.5 years. Table 4.2 reports the ages of all sample members at the end of this follow-up period.[4] The table also reports the age distribution separately for teens who were enrolled in school at random assignment and for teens who were not initially enrolled, the key subgroups used in this analysis. The ages of sample members at the end of follow-up will be important to consider when interpreting the low levels of high school and GED completions.

Table 4.2 shows that just over half of Cleveland teens (54.5 percent) were 20 or older at the end of follow-up (and thus no longer eligible for LEAP). This proportion varied substantially according to whether a teen was enrolled in school at the time of random assignment: 44.7 percent of initially enrolled teens had aged out of LEAP by the end of follow-up, compared with 66.6 percent of teens not initially enrolled. Only 7.9 percent of all teens in the sample were still under 18 at the end of follow-up. This category included 11.3 percent of initially enrolled teens and 3.6 percent of teens not initially enrolled.

II. Grant Adjustments

The analysis of bonuses and sanctions requested for LEAP teens in the Cleveland sample uses LEAP casefile data gathered for a random subset of 170 program group members from the Cleveland

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[4]An academic year is assumed to end on June 30. Therefore, the age at the end of follow-up of a sample member whose third academic year was 1992-93 is whatever it was on June 30, 1993.

TABLE 4.2

AGE OF TEENS IN THE CLEVELAND SAMPLE AT THE END OF LEAP FOLLOW-UP

Characteristic	All Teens	Teens Enrolled in School at Random Assignment	Teens Not Enrolled in School at Random Assignment
Age (years) (%)			
16 or less	1.9	2.5	1.1
17	6.0	8.8	2.5
18	11.2	14.8	6.6
19	26.5	29.1	23.2
20	40.0	37.0	43.7
21	14.5	7.7	22.9
Average age (years)	19.9	19.6	20.3
Sample size	1,704	945	759

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheets.

NOTES: This table includes teens in both the program and the control groups.

Follow-up lasted for three academic years, counting the academic year in which a sample member was randomly assigned. The average length of follow-up was 2.5 years.

Distributions may not add up to 100.0 percent because of rounding.

sample, supplemented by automated LEAP casefile information from the Cuyahoga County Department of Human Services. MDRC staff members reviewed LEAP casefile data to assess the frequency of bonus and sanction requests by the LEAP staff, as well as to obtain information on exemptions, eligibility, and other operational issues. As was true for the last evaluation report on LEAP, this analysis focuses on sanction and bonus requests, rather than on actual grant adjustments, because the former represent intended program actions. In addition, because Cuyahoga County's ability to process grant adjustments improved substantially during the first three years — particularly with the implementation of the new computer system — the data on requests reliably indicate how LEAP is likely to operate under steady-state conditions. Unlike the last report, which looked at bonus and sanction requests during the first 18 months of LEAP eligibility, this analysis considers the entire period teens were in the LEAP program.[5]

Two of the overall conclusions of the earlier analysis have not changed. First, virtually all teens were touched by LEAP's incentive structure at some point after their eligibility for LEAP was confirmed. Ninety-four percent of all eligible teens in Cleveland were slated for at least one bonus or sanction during the time they were eligible for the program.

Second, more than three quarters of the eligible teens qualified for at least one bonus payment. Of 100 typical LEAP teens, 78 earned one or more bonuses, with 26 qualifying for bonuses only and 52 earning both bonuses and grant reductions (see Figure 4.1). These figures indicate that most eligible teens cooperated with LEAP at some point, at least in terms of enrolling in a school or a GED program and verifying enrollment (which resulted in the first bonus a teen could receive).

On the other hand, the extent of sanctioning suggests that teens' cooperation was far from complete. Among 100 typical teens, 68 received at least one sanction request. In addition, 16 teens out of 100 received only sanction requests (and no bonuses) during their time in LEAP; of those 16, 10 received nine or more sanction requests.

Similar to the results from the last report, the proportion of teens who earned bonuses, 78 percent, exceeds the proportion who qualified for sanctions, 68 percent. However, the difference between these updated bonus and sanction rates, which include grant adjustments for the entire period teens were in LEAP, is substantially smaller than the difference between bonus and sanction rates from the last report, which included only grant adjustments during the first 18 months of eligibility. During

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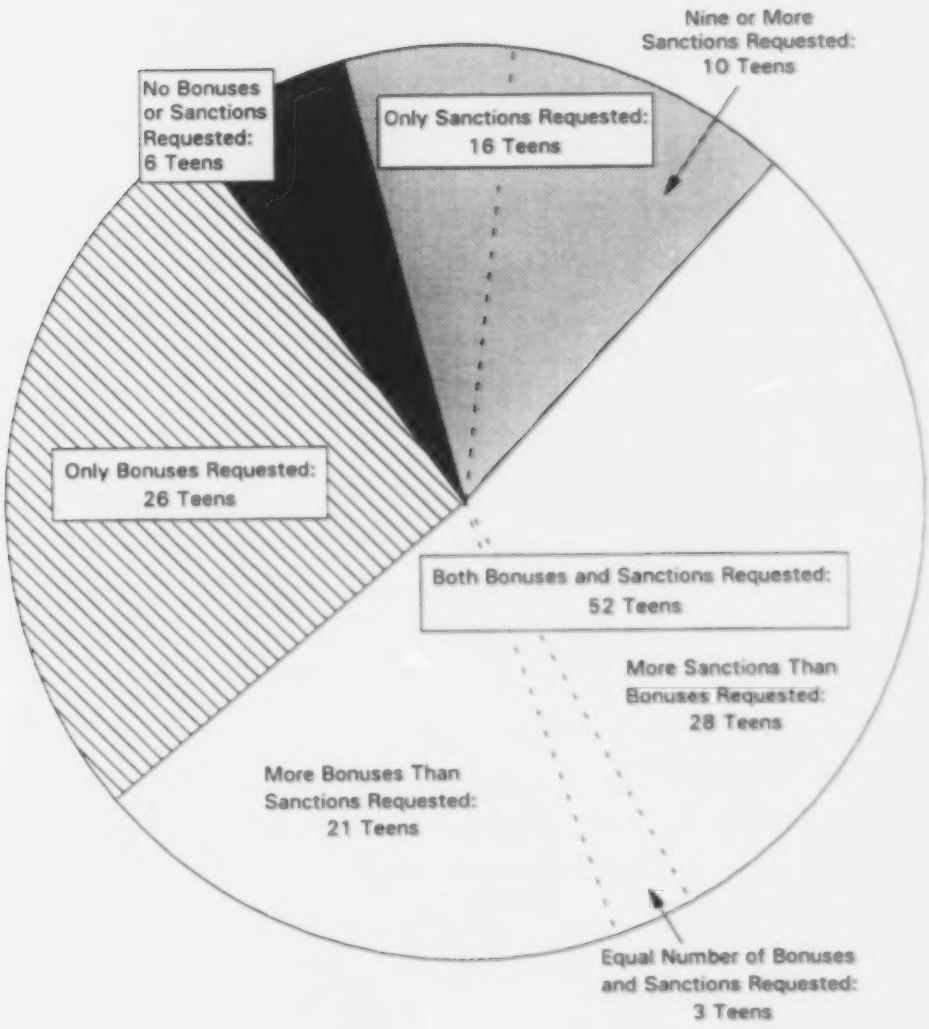
[5]Complete data are available on 138 of the 170 cases in the subsample that was analyzed. In the other 32 cases, the data cover the teens' first 26 to 49 months of LEAP eligibility.

FIGURE 4.1

BONUS AND SANCTION REQUESTS FOR 100 TYPICAL CLEVELAND TEENS IN LEAP


Nine or More Sanctions Requested: 10 Teens
No Bonuses or Sanctions Requested: 6 Teens
Only Sanctions Requested: 16 Teens
Only Bonuses Requested: 26 Teens
Both Bonuses and Sanctions Requested: 52 Teens
More Sanctions Than Bonuses Requested: 28 Teens
More Bonuses Than Sanctions Requested: 21 Teens
Equal Number of Bonuses and Sanctions Requested: 3 Teens

SOURCE: MDRC review of casefile data for a random subsample of 170 program group members in Cleveland.

NOTE: Depending on the date of random assignment, follow-up ranged from 26 to 49 months. At the end of the follow-up, 19 percent of the teens were still eligible for LEAP.

the first 18 months, 73 percent of Cleveland teens (and 75 percent of teens statewide) had earned bonuses and 50 percent (56 percent statewide) had qualified for sanctions.

The last report found that the Cuyahoga County LEAP staff requested 4.0 bonuses (3.5 statewide) and 2.8 sanctions (the same as the statewide average) per eligible teen through the first 18 months of program eligibility. Over their entire LEAP eligibility, the average number of bonus requests for Cleveland teens grew to 5.7 and sanction requests per teen jumped to 6.3 (see the first column of Table 4.3). While the average number of bonuses earned through 18 months exceeded the number of sanction requests, the number of sanction requests per teen now exceeds the average number of bonus requests.

These numbers suggest that, on average, teens earned more bonuses during the early months of their LEAP eligibility and more sanctions during the later months. This could be true for a variety of reasons. For example, some teens, who were enrolled during the first year or two of their LEAP eligibility and then graduated or received a GED, would have received bonuses during the early months of follow-up and then neither bonuses nor sanctions during the later months. Other teens, who were enrolled during the early period and then dropped out, would have received bonuses in the early months, sanctions in the later months. Some teens, who may have been exempt from sanctioning during the early period due to pregnancy or having a child under three months old, would have received neither bonuses nor sanctions during the early months and then sanctions after their exemption ended.

Among the 68.2 percent of teens who ever qualified for a sanction, there were an average of 9.2 sanction requests during the time they were in LEAP. Forty-five percent of these teens qualified for nine or more sanctions, and 24 percent of these teens did not earn any bonus (not shown in table or figure). This high level of sanctioning implies that many teens are not responding to LEAP's inducements to change their behavior; at the same time, the program is substantially reducing the welfare income of some affected families. Moreover, the "ever-sanctioned" rate of 68.2 percent far exceeds the rates measured in evaluations of mandatory welfare-to-work programs for adults.[6]

Table 4.3 and Figure 4.2 present bonus and sanction request rates by the teens' school enrollment status at the point of random assignment. It is clear in both the table and the figure that the brunt of LEAP's sanctioning has been borne by teens who were not enrolled in school at the point of random assignment. Figure 4.2 shows that more than three quarters of school dropouts qualified

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[6]See Bloom et al., 1993, ch. 5, for further discussion.

TABLE 4.3

REQUESTED GRANT ADJUSTMENTS FOR TEENS IN THE CLEVELAND SAMPLE WITHIN 26 TO 49 MONTHS OF LEAP ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION (RANDOM ASSIGNMENT)

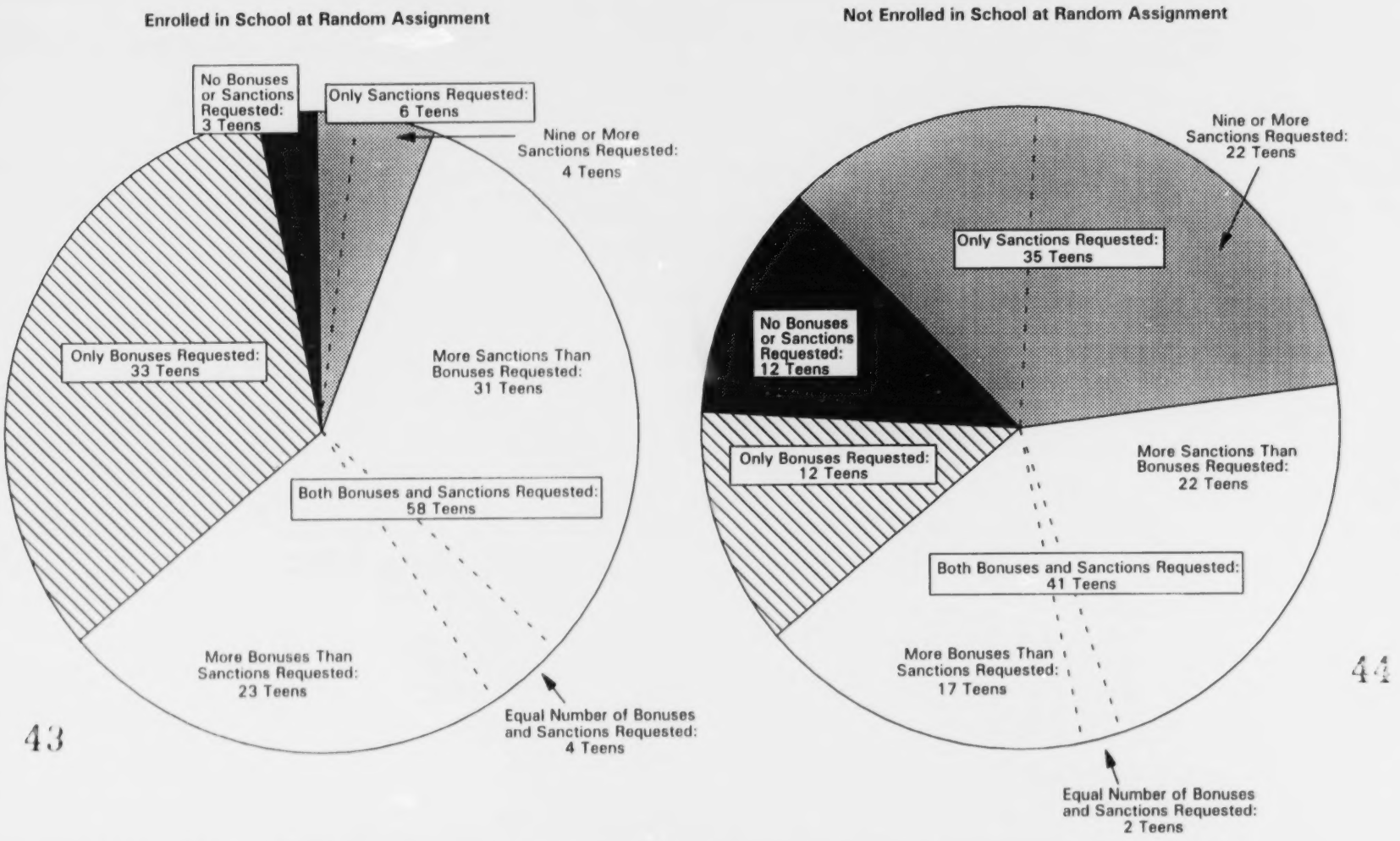
Sample and Measure	All Teens	Teens Enrolled in School at Random Assignment	Teens Not Enrolled in School at Random Assignment
Ever any bonus request (%)	77.6	91.0	52.5
Average number of bonus requests	5.7	7.0	3.3
Average number of bonus requests for those who received at least one bonus request	7.4	7.7	6.2
Ever any sanction request (%)	68.2	64.0	76.3
Average number of sanction requests	6.3	5.7	7.4
Average number of sanction requests for those who received at least one sanction request	9.2	8.9	9.7
Teens who were LEAP-eligible at the end of follow-up (%)	18.8	22.5	11.9
Sample size	170	111	59

SOURCE: MDRC review of casefile data for a random subsample of program group members in Cleveland.

NOTE: Figures include grant adjustments that occurred during the entire follow-up period. The follow-up includes the entire period in LEAP for 138 of the 170 teens (81 percent). For the remaining 32 teens, figures include grant adjustments during their first 26 to 49 months in LEAP.

FIGURE 4.2

BONUS AND SANCTION REQUESTS FOR 100 TYPICAL CLEVELAND TEENS IN LEAP, BY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT STATUS AT RANDOM ASSIGNMENT


Enrolled in School at Random Assignment
No Bonuses or Sanctions Requested: 3 Teens
Only Sanctions Requested: 6 Teens
Nine or More Sanctions Requested: 4 Teens
Only Bonuses Requested: 33 Teens
More Sanctions Than Bonuses Requested: 31 Teens
Both Bonuses and Sanctions Requested: 58 Teens
More Bonuses Than Sanctions Requested: 23 Teens
Equal Number of Bonuses and Sanctions Requested: 4 Teens
Not Enrolled in School at Random Assignment
Nine or More Sanctions Requested: 22 Teens
Only Sanctions Requested: 35 Teens
No Bonuses or Sanctions Requested: 12 Teens
Only Bonuses Requested: 12 Teens
More Sanctions Than Bonuses Requested: 22 Teens
Both Bonuses and Sanctions Requested: 41 Teens
More Bonuses Than Sanctions Requested: 17 Teens
Equal Number of Bonuses and Sanctions Requested: 2 Teens

SOURCE: MDRC review of casefile data for a random subsample of 170 program group members in Cleveland.

NOTE: Depending on the date of random assignment, follow-up ranged from 26 to 49 months. At the end of the follow-up, 19 percent of the teens were still eligible for LEAP.

for at least one sanction. Over half of the dropouts qualified for more sanctions than bonuses (including those who received sanctions only), while more than one in five qualified for nine or more sanctions and no bonuses. Approximately half of the dropouts never earned a bonus.

In contrast, fewer than two thirds of teens who were initially in school were referred for a sanction. Only a little more than a third of initially enrolled teens were referred for more sanctions than bonuses, and fewer than one in 20 received nine or more sanction requests with no bonus requests. In addition, almost all of these teens (91 percent) earned at least one bonus.

III. Education Outcomes

This report uses two data sources to measure education outcomes: automated records from the Cleveland Public School System and GED testing data from the Ohio Department of Education. In contrast, the last report on the statewide LEAP evaluation relied primarily on survey data to assess the program's impact on education outcomes.

The school records data include days attended, credits earned, and graduations during the 1989-90 through the 1992-93 academic years. These data cover all public schools in Cleveland, including special schools, junior high schools, and elementary schools as well as regular high schools. However, the completion of a teen in the Cleveland sample who moved and graduated from a high school outside of Cleveland would not be reported in the data used in this analysis.

The GED testing data include dates of passing the GED test through June 30, 1993. These data do not include any information on enrollment or attendance in a GED preparation class. The data used cover GED tests taken throughout the State of Ohio. Therefore, if a teen moved out of Cleveland and then passed the GED test, these data would include her completion as long as she passed the test in Ohio.

These GED and school records data provide three academic years of follow-up on education outcomes for all sample members. Education outcomes included in the report are measured at the end of the first, the second, and the third academic years after random assignment. An academic year is defined as July 1 through June 30.[7]

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[7]The first academic year is that in which random assignment occurred: for example, if someone was randomly assigned on February 1, 1990, then her first academic year was July 1, 1989, through June 30, 1990. Since random assignment for most teens occurred part way through the first academic year, first-year impacts may be smaller than they would have been if they had been measured for the first 12 months after random assignment.

The education outcomes examined in this analysis include school attendance, school progress, and high school and GED completion. The measure of school attendance is whether a teen attended a high school or junior high school for at least 20 days during the academic year, and represents a minimum attachment to school. The measure of school progress is whether a teen earned some school credit during the academic year. This measure indicates a stronger attachment to school, one that demonstrates progress toward a high school diploma. A sample member is considered to have earned high school credit if she passed at least one semester of a one-credit course. Since credits are unavailable for sample members in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, sample members in these grades are considered to have earned high school credit if they were promoted to the next grade.

The completion outcomes include whether sample members have ever graduated from high school, whether they have ever passed the GED test, and whether they have done either one. Unlike the attendance and progress outcomes, the completion outcomes are measured cumulatively: that is, they measure whether teens have ever completed high school or the GED, rather than whether they completed during a given school year.

A. The Impact of LEAP

As shown in the first two lines of Table 4.4, LEAP increased the proportion both of teens who were attending school and of those who were earning school credit during their first two academic years in LEAP. For example, 22.5 percent of program group teens, compared with 18.0 percent of the control group, attended school during the second academic year, an impact of 4.5 percentage points, while 14.9 percent of those in the program group, and 10.6 percent of controls, earned credit toward a high school degree during that year, an impact of 4.3 percentage points.

LEAP's smaller impact on school attendance and progress in the third year after random assignment is statistically insignificant. This decline in attendance and progress impacts is due, in large part, to the fact that since more teens in the program group than in the control group had completed high school or gotten a GED during the first two years (see last row of the table), fewer teens in the program group were eligible to attend high school in the third year. In addition, LEAP may have been less effective in promoting school attendance by the third academic year.

Some of LEAP's impact on high school attendance and progress appears to have translated into a small impact on high school completion (row 3 of the table). At the end of the third academic year, 14.0 percent of teens in the program group and 11.2 percent of controls had completed high school.

TABLE 4.4

IMPACTS OF LEAP ON HIGH SCHOOL AND GED OUTCOMES FOR TEENS IN THE CLEVELAND SAMPLE

Outcome	As of June 30, Year 1 (a) (%)			As of June 30, Year 2 (b) (%)			As of June 30, Year 3 (c) (%)		
	Program Group	Control Group	Difference	Program Group	Control Group	Difference	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
Attended high school in past 12 months	40.1	35.4	4.6 *	22.5	18.0	4.5 **	11.6	9.6	2.0
Earned high school credit in past 12 months	28.6	23.9	4.6 *	14.9	10.6	4.3 **	6.9	5.4	1.5
Ever completed high school	6.8	4.4	2.3 *	11.7	9.8	1.9	14.0	11.2	2.9
Ever completed GED	1.4	0.7	0.7	4.3	2.4	1.9	7.1	4.3	2.8 *
Ever completed high school or GED	8.1	5.1	3.0 **	16.0	12.2	3.8 *	21.1	15.5	5.6 **
Sample size	1,392	312		1,392	312		1,392	312	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheets, automated school records from the Cleveland public school district, and automated GED testing data from the Ohio Department of Education.

NOTES: "June 30, year 1" denotes the first June 30th after random assignment; "June 30, year 2" and "June 30, year 3," the second and third June 30ths after random assignment, respectively.

A sample member is considered to have attended high school if she was present at least 20 days during the previous school year. Junior high school attendance is also counted in this definition.

A sample member is considered to have earned high school credit if she passed at least one semester of a one-credit course. Since credits are unavailable for sample members in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, sample members in these grades are considered to have earned high school credit if they were promoted to the next grade.

"Completed GED" refers to passing the GED test.

Differences, as well as program and control group means, are regression-adjusted to correct for slight differences between program and control groups in baseline characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

(a) At this point, 54.5 percent of the sample were age 18 or older, and 0 percent were age 20 or older (and thus no longer eligible for LEAP).

(b) 81.0 percent of the sample were age 18 or older, and 14.6 percent were age 20 or older.

(c) 92.1 percent of the sample were age 18 or older, and 54.5 percent were age 20 or older.

This 2.9 percentage point impact is not statistically significant at traditional levels; it is, however, significant at the 15 percent level.

LEAP also increased the rate of passing the GED test from 4.3 percent to 7.1 percent by the end of the third year, for a significant impact of 2.8 percentage points. The GED and high school completion impacts combined were a statistically significant 5.6 percentage points by the end of the third year. At this point, 21.1 percent of the program group had completed either high school or the GED, compared with 15.5 percent of controls.

Furthermore, school enrollment at the time of random assignment made a distinct difference in whether LEAP encouraged teens to complete their schooling (see Table 4.5). Thus, by the end of the third academic year, 23.7 percent of initially enrolled teens in the program group and 18.1 percent of those in the control group had graduated from high school – a 5.6 percentage point difference. Also, 29.2 percent of program group teens had either completed high school or passed the GED test, compared with 20.4 percent of controls – an 8.8 percentage point difference.

In contrast, among those who were initially not enrolled, all impacts are small and statistically insignificant. Among these teens, at the end of the third academic year, 11.1 percent of the program group had completed high school or gotten a GED, while 8.6 percent of teens in the control group had completed – a 2.6 percentage point difference. These findings suggest that LEAP was much more successful at getting initially enrolled teens to remain in school until they graduated and encouraging them to pass the GED if they dropped out, than it was at encouraging out-of-school teens either to return to complete high school or to earn a GED.

B. The Low School Completion Rates

More striking than the impact figures is the fact that so few of the teens in the Cleveland sample completed their schooling. At the end of the three-year follow-up period, only 21.1 percent of the program group and 15.5 percent of the control group had either graduated from high school or received a GED (see Table 4.4).

There are several reasons for these low completion rates. First, a substantial fraction of sample members (46 percent) were still in their teens at the end of the follow-up period (see Table 4.2), and some may well graduate from high school or earn a GED in the fourth academic year or beyond. In addition, the 9 percent of program group members and 8 percent of controls who were still attending high school during the last academic year observed, but had not graduated at its end (not shown in the

TABLE 4.5

IMPACTS OF LEAP ON HIGH SCHOOL AND GED OUTCOMES FOR TEENS IN THE CLEVELAND SAMPLE, BY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT STATUS AT RANDOM ASSIGNMENT

Subgroup and Outcome	As of June 30, Year 1 (a) (%)			As of June 30, Year 2 (b) (%)			As of June 30, Year 3 (c) (%)		
	Program Group	Control Group	Difference	Program Group	Control Group	Difference	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
Enrolled in school at random assignment									
Attended high school in past 12 months	60.9	50.9	10.0 ***	34.7	28.9	5.8	18.5	15.2	3.3
Earned high school credit in past 12 months	46.9	37.8	9.1 **	24.4	16.7	7.7 **	11.5	7.8	3.7
Ever completed high school	11.7	7.4	4.3 *	19.6	16.4	3.3	23.7	18.1	5.6 *
Ever completed GED	1.2	0.3	0.9	3.7	1.6	2.1	5.6	2.3	3.3 *
Ever completed high school or GED	12.9	7.6	5.3 **	23.3	18.0	5.3 *	29.2	20.4	8.8 **
Sample size	771	174		771	174		771	174	
Not enrolled in school at random assignment									
Attended high school in past 12 months	14.2	15.7	−1.5	7.3	4.3	3.0	3.1	2.2	0.8
Earned high school credit in past 12 months	5.9	5.8	0.1	3.2	2.9	0.4	1.3	2.3	−1.0
Ever completed high school	0.9	0.0	0.9	2.1	0.8	1.3	2.2	1.5	0.8
Ever completed GED	1.6	1.0	0.6	5.0	3.4	1.6	8.9	7.1	1.8
Ever completed high school or GED	2.4	0.9	1.4	7.1	4.2	2.9	11.1	8.6	2.6
Sample size	621	138		621	138		621	138	

(continued)

TABLE 4.5 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheets, automated school records from the Cleveland public school district, and automated GED testing data from the Ohio Department of Education.

NOTES: Sample members are considered enrolled in school if they reported being enrolled in a high school, junior high school, or GED program.

"June 30, year 1" denotes the first June 30th after random assignment; "June 30, year 2" and "June 30, year 3," the second and third June 30ths after random assignment, respectively.

A sample member is considered to have attended high school if she was present at least 20 days during the previous school year. Junior high school attendance is also counted in this definition.

A sample member is considered to have earned high school credit if she passed at least one semester of a one-credit course. Since credits are unavailable for sample members in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, sample members in these grades are considered to have earned high school credit if they were promoted to the next grade.

"Completed GED" refers to passing the GED test.

Differences, as well as program and control group means, are regression-adjusted to correct for slight differences between program and control groups in baseline characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

(a) At this point, 44.8 percent of the initially enrolled sample were age 18 or older, and 0 percent were age 20 or older (and thus no longer eligible for LEAP); 66.7 percent of the initially not enrolled sample were age 18 or older, and 0 percent were age 20 or older.

(b) 73.9 percent of the initially enrolled sample were age 18 or older, and 7.7 percent were age 20 or older; 89.9 percent of the initially not enrolled sample were age 18 or older, and 23.2 percent were age 20 or older.

(c) 88.7 percent of the initially enrolled sample were age 18 or older, and 44.8 percent were age 20 or older; 96.4 percent of the initially not enrolled sample were age 18 or older, and 66.7 percent were age 20 or older.

table), may well graduate in due time. Further, additional sample members will earn a GED at some time in the next several years.

Second, there is some underreporting of high school completion since these data do not cover teens who started in the LEAP program in Cleveland but then moved out of the city. It is difficult to estimate the number of graduations missed. It depends both on the mobility of the Cleveland sample and the likelihood that those who move will graduate. However, even if a quarter of graduations were missed for this reason (which seems unlikely), these additional completions would raise the overall school completion rates by only a few percentage points.[8]

Finally, teen parents in general have a strong tendency not to finish high school. For example, David Ribar analyzed data on a nationally representative sample of young women from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY).[9] His data included women who were 14 to 21 years old in 1979, and covered the period 1979 to 1985. Including women on and off welfare, Ribar found that 42 percent of women who gave birth before the age of 18 had graduated from high school or received a GED by the age of 20. In contrast, 84 percent of all women in his sample (teen mothers and non-teen mothers combined) had graduated from high school or gotten a GED by the age of 20.

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[8]In any case, since there is no reason to believe that the proportion of graduations missed would be different for program and control groups, these missing graduations should not affect the measurement of the *proportional* impact of LEAP on high school graduations, although it could affect the difference in percentage points. Let us say, for example, that if 20 percent (a large segment the better to illustrate the point) of graduations are missed due to sample members moving out of Cleveland, the actual high school graduation rate at the end of follow-up would be 16.8 percent for the program group and 13.4 percent for controls, for an absolute impact of 3.4 percentage points, instead of 2.9. Although increasing both the program and the control groups means by 20 percent increases the absolute impact by 20 percent, the proportional impact (the absolute impact divided by the control group mean) is unaffected: with a slight discrepancy due to rounding, 2.9/11.2 = 3.4/13.4 = 26 percent.

[9]Ribar, 1992.

CHAPTER 5

ESTABLISHING ENHANCED SERVICES IN CLEVELAND

The heart of the LEAP program is its incentive structure. The program provides no services other than case management which, in terms of average caseloads per case manager, closely resembles the average in adult JOBS (Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training) programs. LEAP does offer financial assistance with child care and transportation. However, LEAP teens must arrange child care and transportation themselves. Child care assistance has been provided only to a small fraction of LEAP teens, largely because Ohio law does not allow assistance to be provided for unlicensed care. Identical child care assistance was available to the control group.

By contrast, the Cleveland Student Parent Demonstration has made available to LEAP teens two sets of enhanced services. First, for approximately half of LEAP teens three services were established in Cleveland high schools: in-school child care centers, instruction in life skills and parenting practices, and in-school case management. Second, teens in this group who did not attend a school on a regular basis were eligible for other enhanced community-based services: neighborhood outreach and enriched GED preparation programs, both operated by community-based organizations in different sections of Cleveland.

This chapter discusses this enhanced service environment: first, the creation of the enhanced and regular research groups and then of the school- and community-based services; the allocation and implementation of these services; and, finally, their cost. The next chapter will discuss the research design and present the estimated impacts of the enhanced services.

I. Creating Enhanced and Regular Schools

When the LEAP program began in 1989, the main service for teen parents offered in Cleveland high schools was GRADS (Graduation, Reality and Dual-Role Skills). This Ohio Department of Education program uses specially trained home economics teachers to provide instruction and services to pregnant and parenting teens. In 1989, GRADS was offered at nine of 12 Cleveland high schools. At that time, the Cleveland Public School System had chosen four high schools in which to provide on-site child care for student parents. These child care centers began operating in the four high schools during the 1989-90 and 1990-91 school years.

These preexisting in-school services created different service environments in which LEAP

operated. Moreover, these service differences provided the opportunity to measure the impact of additional services on the educational outcomes of teen parents. The MDRC staff built on these preexisting service differences across schools to create a quasi-experimental research design that could be used to examine the importance of services in the LEAP context.

A key feature of the Cleveland public schools, which adds to the strength of the quasi-experimental research design used in this analysis, is the school system's use of busing as part of its court-ordered desegregation plan. This plan groups Cleveland's 12 high schools into six pairs. In most cases, one high school in a pair is in a historically white area of the city and the other in a historically black area. The area surrounding each school is divided into small residential zones. Residents in approximately half of these zones are assigned to the local high school; those in other zones are bused to the paired high school in another part of the city.

Building on both the busing system and the preexisting service differences across high schools, two groups of schools were designated: enhanced schools and regular schools. Both of these groups contained one high school from each of the busing pairs, so that both groups of schools included teens from all parts of Cleveland. Within each pair, the high school offering the most teen-parent services was placed in the enhanced group, the other in the regular group.[1] This method of choosing enhanced schools assured the largest possible difference between the two groups of schools in terms of services offered. At the same time, the busing system assured that the students attending the two groups of schools were similar.

After these two groups of high schools were created, the difference in the level of services provided between the groups of schools was intentionally increased. Working with the MDRC staff, the Cuyahoga County Department of Human Services placed on-site case managers at the six schools in the enhanced group only. These workers provided intensive individual counseling and support service assistance to LEAP teens in enhanced schools. The services offered in each of the high schools are listed in Table 5.1.

In addition, LEAP teens who were assigned to enhanced schools, but did not attend them regularly, were eligible for the community-based services (see pages 48-58).

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[1]Within four pairs, the high school slated to offer on-site child care was placed in the enhanced group; the other, in the regular group. In one of the other two pairs, the school that had a GRADS program was chosen (the other school did not offer GRADS); and in the final pair, in which both schools had GRADS, the school located in the historically white area was chosen, so that for both enhanced and regular high schools, three were located in historically white areas and three in historically black areas. An additional enhanced high school added on-site child care during the 1992-93 school year.

TABLE 5.1

ENHANCED SERVICES AVAILABLE AT CLEVELAND HIGH SCHOOLS

Enhanced High Schools	Regular High Schools
East Technical Child care Case management GRADS (2 teachers)	South GRADS (1 teacher)
Glenville Child care* Case management GRADS (2 teachers)	Lincoln–West
John Adams Child care** Case management GRADS (2 teachers)	James Ford Rhodes GRADS (1 teacher)
West Technical Child care Case management GRADS (2 teachers)	John Hay GRADS (1 teacher, 2 teachers**)
East Child care* Case management GRADS	Collinwood GRADS* (1 teacher)
John Marshall Case management GRADS (2 teachers)	John F. Kennedy

NOTE: All services became available during the 1989–90 school year except those marked with one asterisk, which became available during the 1990–91 school year, or two asterisks, which became available during the 1992–93 school year.

GRADS (Graduation, Reality and Dual–Role Skills) is a preexisting Ohio Department of Education program that uses specially trained home economics teachers to provide instruction and services to pregnant and parenting students.

II. The Research Groups

As described earlier, teens in the Cleveland sample were placed into research groups using two methods: one experimental, one quasi-experimental. First, teens were assigned randomly to the program group (which received the LEAP treatment) or the control group (which did not), as part of the statewide LEAP evaluation. These research groups (group A and group B, respectively, in Table 5.2) are the groups that were compared to measure the overall impact of LEAP in Chapter 4. Second, the same teens were assigned to the enhanced group (which received additional services) or the regular group (which did not) through their school assignment. School assignment was not done randomly, but was instead based on a teen's residential zone. These two methods created four additional research groups: the enhanced program group, the regular program group, the enhanced control group, and the regular control group (groups C through F, respectively, in Table 5.2).

Table 5.3 describes the LEAP treatment and the set of services received by each of these groups. The enhanced program group (group C) received both the LEAP treatment and the full set of regular and enhanced services. In contrast, the enhanced control group (group E) did not receive the LEAP treatment and received only a subset of the enhanced services; this group was eligible for the on-site child care and the enhanced access to GRADS, but not for on-site case management or any of the enhanced out-of-school services.[2]

Both regular program and regular control group teens (groups D and F) were ineligible for all enhanced services.[3] They were, however, eligible for regular services. These services included GRADS classes in most schools and assistance from the Cuyahoga County Department of Human Services with child care expenses. The regular program group (group D) received the LEAP treatment, while the regular control group (group F) did not.

Chapter 6 will compare groups C and D, in order to measure the impact of enhanced services when added to LEAP. As will be discussed in that chapter, this comparison, unlike the comparison

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[2]Any student parent who attended an enhanced high school was able to use child care and GRADS services.

[3]Teens who were in the regular program and control groups (group D and F) sometimes received school-based child care and enhanced GRADS services when they changed residence (i.e., "crossovers" who moved to a residential zone that resulted in reassignment to an enhanced high school) or successfully petitioned for school reassignment. Being a parent was not an acceptable reason for reassignment, but some teens in the regular group may have been reassigned for other reasons. The school-based case management, however, was restricted to the enhanced program group (group C).

TABLE 5.2

THE ASSIGNMENT OF TEENS TO RESEARCH GROUPS IN THE CLEVELAND STUDENT PARENT DEMONSTRATION

		Assignment to Enhanced or Regular Groups Based on Teen's Residential Zone:	
		Enhanced Group	Regular Group
LEAP random assignment to program or control groups: (N = 1,704)	Program group (Group A) [=Groups C+D] (N = 1,392)	Enhanced program group (Group C) (N = 777)	Regular program group (Group D) (N = 615)
	Control group (Group B) [=Groups E+F] (N = 312)	Enhanced control group (Group E) (N = 167)	Regular control group (Group F) (N = 145)

TABLE 5.3

LEAP TREATMENT AND AVAILABLE SERVICES FOR THE FOUR RESEARCH GROUPS IN THE CLEVELAND STUDENT PARENT DEMONSTRATION

	Program Group (Group A [=C+D])		Control Group (Group B [=E+F])	
	Enhanced (Group C)	**Regular (Group D)**	**Enhanced (Group E)**	**Regular (Group F)**
LEAP treatment	Bonuses and sanctions paid. Case management provided.	Bonuses and sanctions paid. Case management provided.	No bonuses or sanctions paid. No case management.	No bonuses or sanctions paid. No case management.
Regular services	Some child care assistance provided. GRADS available in most schools.	Some child care assistance provided. GRADS available in most schools.	Some child care assistance provided. GRADS available in most schools.	Some child care assistance provided. GRADS available in most schools.
Enhanced school-based services	On-site child care in most high schools. Enhanced access to GRADS. On-site case management in all high schools.	None.	On-site child care in most high schools. Enhanced access to GRADS.	None.
Enhanced community-based services	Community outreach. Enhanced GED programs available at three locations.	None.	None.	None.

of groups A and B in Chapter 4, is quasi-experimental. The estimated impact of the services must therefore be interpreted with greater caution than the impacts reported in Chapter 4.[4]

III. The School-Based Services

Enhanced school-based services were offered in six of Cleveland's 12 high schools. As indicated earlier, two of the services, child care and instruction in parenting and life skills (GRADS), were planned or already provided by the Cleveland public schools before the start of the demonstration. The idea for the third service, in-school case management, came from the Cuyahoga County Department of Human Services, which had planned to station case managers at the five high schools with the largest numbers of LEAP students, but instead – as the demonstration was developed – placed staff at the six enhanced high schools.

A. On-Site Child Care

In five of the six enhanced high schools, the Cleveland public schools established child care centers where students could bring their children while they were attending school. In two schools, the centers began to accept children during the second semester of the 1989-90 school year; two centers opened in the middle of the 1990-91 school year; and the fifth was available during the 1992-93 school year. The opening of the first four centers was delayed while their facilities were improved to meet state child care standards. In-school child care was eventually made available to most of the enhanced program group teens (group C from Table 5.3), as well as to most enhanced control group members (group E) who were also eligible for this enhanced service. During the 1992-93 school year, approximately one quarter of the enhanced teens who attended high school actually used this service.

The centers, which provided licensed child care during normal school hours, were staffed by a certified teacher, one or more child care technicians, and student assistants. The centers, which

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[4]Although it would also be possible to compare teens in the enhanced control group (group E) with teens in the regular control group (group F), in order to estimate the effect of the enhanced services in the control environment, the small size of these two groups (about 150 teens in each) makes it difficult to measure enhancement effects precisely. In addition, only enhanced teens in the program group (group C) had access to the full set of enhanced services: in-school child care, greater access to the GRADS program, in-school case management, and the community-based services. Enhanced control teens (group E) had access only to child care and GRADS. Therefore, the treatment difference between enhanced control and regular control teens is quite small. For these reasons, comparisons of the enhanced and regular control groups (group E versus group F) are not presented in this report.

accepted children as young as six months old, served an average of 14 children each at any given time during the 1992-93 school year. The centers were available to all students with children, not just students in LEAP. These capacity limitations sometimes meant that school-based child care was not available to every teen parent who wanted it.

The on-site centers were beneficial to LEAP's teen mothers because they made it easier to get to school and enabled them to visit their children during the school day. However, LEAP teens did not necessarily use these centers: some mothers preferred other types of care or found other options more convenient; many preferred using a relative or friend.

B. Parenting and Life Skills Instruction (GRADS)

All six enhanced schools offered GRADS, which provided both instruction and services to pregnant and parenting students during the entire four years covered by this analysis. All enhanced teens, both those in the program group (group C) and those in the control group (group E), had access to the GRADS program. Five of the six schools had two GRADS teachers, and the sixth school had one teacher. These eleven teachers had 502 students enrolled in their classes during part or all of the 1992-93 school year, or 46 per teacher; the number enrolled per teacher was somewhat lower during the three previous years.

GRADS also operated in three of the six regular schools during 1989-90 and in four schools during the subsequent three years; there was one teacher at each school except during 1992-93, when one school had two teachers. During 1992-93 there were five teachers and 327 enrolled students, or 65 students per teacher. During the previous three academic years, when there were three or four GRADS teachers, the student-to-teacher ratio exceeded 80 to 1 in regular high schools. Thus, not all regular schools offered GRADS, while all enhanced schools offered the program. In addition, the regular schools that did offer GRADS had fewer instructors per student than enhanced schools had. For these reasons, teens in the regular program group were substantially less likely to participate in GRADS than teens in the enhanced program group. Roughly one third of teens in the regular program group who attended high school enrolled in GRADS, compared with almost two thirds of those who attended high school in the enhanced program group.

Because of the objectives GRADS pursues, and the students it serves, the program complements LEAP extremely well. The GRADS teachers' primary task is conducting classes that cover topics consistent with LEAP's broad objectives: health care, parenting skills, child development, decision-making and relationship skills, resource management, career exploration and employment

development, job search, and other practical topics. In Cleveland high schools that have GRADS teachers, GRADS classes have met every day. GRADS is offered as an elective course, and students may remain enrolled in the program for up to two years. These classes enhance LEAP's potential effect on teens: teens who are induced by LEAP to stay in school, or to return to school, can acquire skills that, together with their academic education, can help them achieve self-sufficiency and become good parents.

Other key objectives of the GRADS program are encouraging good school attendance and preventing young parents from dropping out of school — goals it shares with LEAP. To varying degrees, GRADS teachers have maintained contact outside the class with pregnant and parenting teens who are not enrolled in their classes, as well as with those who are. Teachers routinely have visited students at home (and in the hospital just after they have given birth), particularly in the enhanced high schools with two GRADS teachers. For students enrolled in GRADS, teachers have helped to monitor attendance and often made home visits when one was absent for several days without an excuse.

Staff from the two programs, GRADS and LEAP, have established close relationships in many areas. GRADS teachers have played an important role in the implementation of LEAP in Cleveland, as well as in other Ohio communities.[5] The teachers have helped communicate information about LEAP to both students and other teachers and school staff. GRADS teachers have also worked with both school-based case managers and Cuyahoga County Department of Human Services case managers to resolve problems affecting particular LEAP teens.

C. On-Site Case Management

Beginning with the second semester of the 1989-90 academic year, all six enhanced high schools had an on-site caseworker from the Cuyahoga County Department of Human Services. These CCDHS staff members belonged to a separate unit (headed by its own supervisor) from the other three units of LEAP case managers based at the central welfare office. The in-school caseworkers actively worked only with the enhanced program teens (group C) who enrolled in school. Unlike the other two in-school services, enhanced control-group members (group E) were ineligible for this service.[6] Each

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[5]See Bloom et al., 1993, ch. 4, for a discussion of GRADS's role in the statewide implementation of LEAP.

[6]Caseworkers responded to questions from students in the control group, but did not initiate interaction with them.

worker was responsible for conducting the LEAP assessment of teens in the enhanced program group who became eligible for the program while enrolled in school, and then maintained close contact — providing assistance and monitoring school progress — with these and other enhanced teens who enrolled in the school.[7]

1. Assisting Students. The in-school caseworkers, each of whom worked with approximately 30 to 60 enrolled LEAP students at any given time, were specially trained for their positions. Case managers were expected to meet individually with enhanced LEAP students on a regular basis. The managers met with teens during their lunch and free periods, and spent time in the on-site child care centers and GRADS classes where they could also speak with the teens. If a teen was enrolled but not attending school, the manager was responsible for finding out why and doing everything possible to get her back in school. As a result, the case managers typically spent two afternoons a week doing home visits.

Caseworkers provided two kinds of assistance: information and counseling, and removing barriers that might keep students from doing well in, or even coming to, school. Thus, caseworkers gave students information about child care options, other services available in the community, education options, employment, and other relevant matters; and also counseled them on school issues, personal problems, and post-secondary options when needed.

The caseworkers also helped LEAP students solve problems that were keeping them out of school or from performing well, whether these problems arose at or away from the high school. Some caseworkers helped students negotiate with public agencies (to address problems with child care,[8] housing, etc.); others worked with a school's staff (for example, with a teen and the attendance secretary to reclassify unexcused absences,[9] or with administrators in re-enrolling a student who had been out of school for a long time). Some caseworkers tried to assist teens in resolving problems with

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[7]Initially, these caseworkers did not have to handle any of the LEAP paperwork for the teens they worked with (including the administration of bonuses and sanctions); this remained the responsibility of the caseworkers based at the central welfare office. This arrangement, which meant that each teen had two case managers, proved confusing, so, in 1991, the in-school caseworkers assumed all duties for their teens.

[8]A school-based case manager acted as a liaison between the school-based child care center, a teen, and the Cuyahoga County Department of Human Services. A manager had authority to approve placements with the centers and directly handle the day care paperwork necessary to arrange payments (normally handled by CCDHS staff in a different division than LEAP).

[9]A case manager sometimes intervened to assist a teen to obtain a waiver from the Cleveland public schools' policy of failing students with 10 or more absences in a quarter. A waiver is granted if teachers and the school principal agree there are extenuating circumstances – and a manager sometimes was able to establish them for a teen's frequent absences.

their living arrangements, and many referred teens to organizations in Cleveland that offered specific services (for example, drug or alcohol treatment, pediatric care, and vocational training). Caseworkers also offered help with students' school-to-work transitions following graduation, offering both advice and referrals to training programs, job search assistance, and other employment-related services.

2. **Monitoring School Progress.** School-based caseworkers were responsible for collecting school attendance information and requesting bonuses and sanctions for the teens with whom they worked. This system enabled LEAP to make grant adjustments with minimal delays and the managers to follow up quickly on teens' attendance problems.

One frequently mentioned limitation of LEAP is that, while the financial incentives encourage teens to attend school, little is done to encourage good academic performance in class (LEAP's attendance requirements apply to school as a whole, not to whether one is present at individual classes during the school day). The school-based caseworkers sought to fill this gap by monitoring student class attendance and grades, and providing feedback to the students. Caseworkers called or talked with students following unexcused absences or disruptive incidents. They gathered information on academic progress in several ways: reviewing report cards with students, meeting with teachers or other school staff, and discussing academic performance with students.

When an older teen was not performing or attending well, or was behind in grade level for her age, the case manager presented the teen with the adult education/GED option as an alternative to high school. The school-based staff then facilitated the teen's transition to a GED program by arranging assessment/enrollment appointments and accompanying her on a visit to the program. The school-based staff were quick to identify teens who would be better off in an alternative education program.

In providing assistance and monitoring progress, the in-school case managers generally developed good rapport with the teen parents in their caseloads. In focus group discussions, teens spoke warmly about the school-based caseworkers. One described her worker as "very supportive," and another said hers was "real interested in me, much more than the teachers." Teens spoke of their caseworker's availability to them — one's "door was always open" — and willingness to tackle any problems that arose.

IV. The Community-Based Services

Enhanced community-based services were directed only to enhanced program group members (group C). Four community organizations – Friendly Inn, Merrick House, the National Institute for Responsible Fatherhood, and the Center for Career Options (see box) – provided various forms of outreach programs, including GED recruitment.

Organizations That Provided Enhanced Community-Based Outreach and GED Services

Friendly Inn Settlement House. This center serves an African-American neighborhood that includes several public housing projects in the central section of Cleveland. It provides a range of services to families and individuals, including parenting support groups (some sessions are specifically for pregnant and parenting teens), counseling and referral services, a babysitting cooperative, intermediate and high school youth groups, and youth employment projects. Friendly Inn provided both outreach and GED services to LEAP teens in central Cleveland. The outreach effort built on the expertise of staff who were already working with teens. A GED class was added specifically for the demonstration, although the organization had offered GED classes in the past.

Merrick House Settlement. This neighborhood center serves the ethnically mixed communities in the west side of Cleveland. Its services include adult education (serving both teens and adults), child care, senior services, recreation, and community planning and organizing in response to neighborhood problems. Merrick House provided both outreach and education services to LEAP teens in western Cleveland. Merrick created the Teen Education Center for the demonstration, which was housed in a renovated school building (separate from Merrick's main location). The GED program for teen parents replicates Merrick's well-established, individualized adult education program. New staff were hired and trained for the outreach effort.

National Institute for Responsible Fatherhood (previously the Teen Father Program). The Institute provides comprehensive services to young fathers, seeking to stabilize their roles as fathers, providers, and role models for their children. Services include outreach, home assessment, parenting education, job search skills development, referral services, AIDS-prevention education, support and counseling on legitimizing children, and conflict management. The Institute provided outreach services to LEAP teens in eastern Cleveland (excluding the area served by Friendly Inn), an ethnically diverse area composed of many neighborhoods. Institute staff have extensive experience in street-level outreach; most of the organization's work revolves around its outreach efforts and work with young fathers and their families.

The Center for Career Options. CCO provides education and career planning services for youth and adults as a contractor for JTPA (the federal Job Training Partnership Act program), the JOBS program, and other programs serving youths. CCO provided GED services to LEAP teens in eastern Cleveland (the same area where the Institute provided outreach services). The organization has two centers on Cleveland's east side, where it offers a nontraditional approach to basic skills development which emphasizes self-paced, computer-assisted instruction. LEAP teens could take classes and receive case management services, provided by client service specialists, in both locations.

A. Outreach

Teens in the enhanced program group were referred for outreach services to Merrick House, Friendly Inn, and the National Institute for Responsible Fatherhood when they were to receive LEAP sanctions for failing to complete the LEAP assessment process, to enroll in high school or a GED program, or to attend school regularly.[10] Thus, the outreach effort was specifically targeted to teens who did not quickly respond to LEAP's financial incentives. Fifty-seven percent of the teens in the enhanced program group were referred for outreach between April 1991 and October 1992.

1. Contacting Teens. The outreach was designed to provide information to the teens and to address whatever barriers might be keeping them from attending school regularly. Specific outreach activities included: contacting referred teens, with the aim of clarifying their understanding of LEAP and their education options; removing barriers to regular school attendance; maintaining contact with teens for a period of at least six months after they started attending an education program; and recruiting teens for the enhanced GED programs.

Making an initial contact with referred teens often took considerable time, and the outreach workers reported spending more than half of their time in the community knocking on doors to locate and meet with teens in their homes. An outreach worker who had difficulty contacting a teen was expected to attempt several home visits, over two to three months, before dropping her case. Locating teens was often hampered by the fact that the Cuyahoga County Department of Human Services could provide only the mailing address where the teen's (or her family's) welfare check was sent, and this address was not always the teen's residence. Moreover, the transience of the teen parent population made it virtually impossible to establish initial contact in some cases or to maintain contact in others, and many teens were removed from an outreach worker's caseload because they moved out of the area for which that outreach worker was responsible.[11] Although outreach workers at Merrick House and Friendly Inn followed up on all available leads and made visits at different times of day in an effort to find someone at home, they were unable to contact about 20 percent of their referrals. Workers at the Institute failed to contact more than 40 percent of their referrals. Thus, over all, almost a third

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[10]In addition, teens who were granted an exemption from the LEAP requirements (due to pregnancy, having a child under three months of age, difficulties obtaining child care, and/or other specified reasons), and had earned past sanctions, were referred for outreach as outreach workers' workloads permitted.

[11]If the teen moved to a part of the city served by another community organization, outreach workers would refer her to the other agency if they had a new address for her.

of the referred teens were not contacted. This low contact rate, especially that of the Institute workers, clearly limited the overall effect of the community-based services.[12]

Once contact was established, the outreach workers presented themselves as a source of information and assistance. In trying to establish rapport with the teens, the workers emphasized that they did not work for the Cuyahoga County Department of Human Services. Many of the young mothers had negative feelings about the welfare department and the way they reported being treated by some of its staff, or feared that offering information might jeopardize their AFDC benefits. The outreach workers from Friendly Inn and Merrick House were able to distance themselves from CCDHS more easily, because their organizations had good reputations in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Outreach workers collected information on the referred teens on a one-page form that they filled out during their initial meetings with a teen mother. These forms indicate that, while the teens contacted by the outreach workers resemble the overall Cleveland sample in many respects, there were three notable exceptions. First, they were older, 77 percent of them being 18 or 19 at initial contact, compared with 33 percent of all eligible teens at random assignment. Second, they had more children: more than a third had two or more children, compared with 12 percent of all teens at random assignment. Most important, only 32 percent were enrolled in an education program (and most enrollees were attending irregularly), compared with 56 percent of eligible teens at random assignment.

2. **Removing Barriers to School Attendance.** The most common reasons that referred teens gave outreach workers for not cooperating with LEAP, enrolling in school, or attending school regularly were lack of child care, being pregnant, and wanting to be a full-time parent at home.

- **Child care**. Child care problems were mentioned by 22 percent of the referred teens as the main reason they were unable to attend school. While the LEAP program pays for care in certified day care homes and licensed centers, finding this care in a convenient location (in terms of home and school) was often reported to be difficult. The supply of child care in Cleveland was limited for children under two years of age and in some areas of the city.

  Additional issues included: (1) Teens in GED programs needed only part-time care, which many organizations were not able to provide; (2) teens said they received limited assistance from the CCDHS child care office (to which LEAP staff referred them) in locating day care openings; and (3) teen parents were

[12]The low contact rate limited the effectiveness not only of the outreach effort, but also of the enhanced GED programs: because Institute workers contacted fewer referred teens, fewer teens were recruited for the Center for Career Options education program.

reluctant to place their children in the care of strangers (for example, teens were concerned about child abuse, or family members warned them not to rely on anyone outside of the family). The teens were particularly uncomfortable with family day care homes – often the only option for children under age 2 – because in most such homes there was only a single adult to care for the children, with no else monitoring their treatment. In light of these issues, outreach workers reported that the availability of a teen's mother to provide child care was often the key factor enabling the young woman to enroll in school and attend regularly.

- **Pregnancy**. Sixteen percent of referred teens reported being pregnant at the initial meeting with an outreach worker, and thus unable to attend school. A teen could be exempted from LEAP's attendance requirement most of the time she was pregnant.

- **Parenting**. Thirty-seven percent of referred teens said that their desire to stay home with their child or children was the main reason they were not in school. Outreach providers reported that teens with only one child demonstrated a greater willingness and capacity to return to school than did those with more children. In fact, all of the teens enrolled in Merrick House's enhanced GED program, one year after it started (in May 1992), had only one child. Of course, for teens with more than one child, the conflicting demands of children and schooling (arranging child care, handling sick children, managing public transportation) are much harder to manage. These teens also tend to be older and thus closer to "aging out" of LEAP and going beyond the threat of sanctions.

Other barriers to school attendance noted by outreach workers include housing problems, transportation needs, low self-esteem, children's health problems, alcohol abuse (but rarely drug abuse), and lack of motivation to obtain a high school degree.

Outreach workers were convinced that often, despite teens' stated reasons for their absences, the bottom line was that they did not truly want to go to school. Only 6 percent of teens were openly resistant to returning to school and told the outreach worker so. Some of these teens did not think that a diploma or a GED was important; others wanted to stay home with their children, or to work, rather than go to school.

The outreach workers also reported that support from family members and significant others positively influenced a teen's behavior. Support from her mother — particularly in providing child care and encouragement — helped a young woman to complete her high school degree. Having a stable relationship with the man in her life was also said to help keep a teen mother in school, although some men appeared to hinder their partner's school attendance out of jealousy.

3. **Ongoing Contact**. Outreach involved little work in an office. Outreach workers were

expected to maintain close contact — defined as a minimum of two in-person contacts per month — with each of the teens referred for outreach.

Outreach workers carried active caseloads of up to 40. This was found to be the maximum number a worker could reasonably handle given the substantial interaction one sought to have with referred teens. The principal ongoing outreach tasks were two-way communication about the LEAP program, providing teens with transportation and information about their education options, monitoring their attendance, and helping with child care decisions.

- **Communication with the LEAP program.** Outreach workers provided teens with information about LEAP and what they needed to do to comply with the program; and information to the CCDHS-based LEAP staff about the teens' enrollment status, possible reasons for exemptions (such as health problems or pregnancy), and address changes.

- **Transportation.** The workers transported many teens to the LEAP office for assessment appointments and to education providers for assessment and enrollment. They sometimes took a teen to a clinic, food bank, grocery store, thrift shop, or to GED classes until she obtained a bus pass from the LEAP program.

- **Information on education options.** The majority of teens referred for outreach were not interested in attending a high school. Many, who had been out of school for some time, were more interested in GED preparation options. The outreach workers sought to connect these teens with the enhanced GED programs being offered as part of the demonstration. For teens who wanted a GED program in another part of the city, the workers investigated other programs and assisted with enrollment.

- **Monitoring attendance.** When a referred teen attended a school or a non-enhanced GED program, most outreach workers periodically contacted the education provider to confirm that she was attending regularly. This follow up was especially important if the worker was having difficulty maintaining contact with the teen or if the teen claimed to be enrolled, but was being sanctioned for not attending school.

- **Child care decisions.** The outreach workers helped the teens become better-educated child care consumers. On the west side of Cleveland, the Merrick House staff tapped into networks of family day care homes and day care centers to locate openings. After one was found, they worked with the teen and with LEAP and the day care staff to complete the paperwork necessary to arrange payments to the provider.

The outreach workers were able to maintain close contact, and provide some dependable help, to many of the teens who were referred to them. One teen said, during the focus group discussions,

that her outreach worker "helps me get through every day. She's always there for me." However, a review of the outreach workers' status reports on their work with referred teens revealed two patterns that limited the effectiveness of the ongoing outreach effort. First, after the initial contact, workers had only sporadic contacts with a substantial proportion of their teens, making progress slow and raising new problems. Second, teens' progress toward completing their education was often disrupted by personal and family crises: for example, housing and health problems, a new pregnancy, and problems with mothers, boyfriends, and other relationships.

The following examples reflect the difficulties encountered by the outreach workers:

- After trying for some time to locate Tonya,[13] her outreach worker discovered she was temporarily living with relatives in Pennsylvania. The teen returned to Cleveland six months later, having decided to move out of her mother's home. Tonya got an apartment and enrolled in a GED program, which she attended a few times. Without her mother to watch her children, however, she could not make adequate day care arrangements and thus could not attend the program. Then problems with her new apartment also kept her from going to classes. Only when Tonya decided to move back in with her mother did she start attending the GED program again.

- Although Sharon enrolled in the GED program at Friendly Inn, she didn't attend until the outreach worker began driving her back and forth between her home and class. After two months of attendance, however, when she was making considerable academic progress, Sharon's child developed a serious illness, and she missed more than two months of classes. When Sharon began attending the GED program regularly once again, she appeared to have fallen back academically.

B. GED Preparation

The enhanced education services provided by Merrick House, Friendly Inn, and the Center for Career Options were intended to offer a supportive learning environment specifically for members of the enhanced program group (group C). Adult basic education/GED preparation classes typically include youths and adults with a wide range of ages, abilities, and life experiences. Teens who have not been successful in school may be intimidated in a class with people who are older or more advanced than they are, or may also feel they cannot relate to other youths their age because of their own greater responsibilities as parents. Because the enhanced GED preparation programs only served teen parents, they incorporated instruction on issues important to these young women (such as

[13]All names have been changed.

assessing child care options or child support enforcement options) and provided them with a support network of peers. The specific services provided in these programs included:

- **Basic education.** A minimum of 10 hours per week of basic education classes in reading and mathematics for teens functioning below the eighth-grade level.

- **Instruction.** A minimum of 10 hours per week of classes in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies in preparation for the GED examinations in these areas.

- **Workshops.** A minimum of three hours per week of workshops on life management skills, parenting, family planning, and employability development.

- **Case management.** Individual counseling and follow-up services — as needed to address obstacles to regular attendance, educational issues, and personal and family problems and to make referrals for vocational training, continuing education, and employment after a teen obtained a GED certificate.

These services responded to the needs and circumstances of teen parents; in addition, the enhanced GED programs operated longer, always had staff on-site, and accepted teen parents under the age of 18.[14] Thus, they offered a more intensive education than did most other GED programs in the city. Because the GED classes were offered in conjunction with other services, program staff members were usually available before and after class hours to provide counseling and additional instruction and tutoring to the teens — not generally available in GED programs.

Two groups were targeted for these special programs. One was the out-of-school teens who were referred to the community providers for outreach services. Outreach workers at Merrick House and Friendly Inn were more successful in recruiting this group for their programs than Institute staff were — recruiting participants for the Center for Career Options's program, suggesting that the close interplay of the outreach and education programs at Merrick and Friendly Inn was desirable.

The other targeted group included teens in the enhanced program group who were considering enrollment in an adult basic education (ABE)/GED program or were enrolled in one that was not focused on teen parents (especially non-intensive programs that offered no special services and as little

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[14]The enhanced programs accepted teens who could not enroll in the Cleveland public schools' adult basic education programs because they were under the age of 18. In Ohio, school enrollment is compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 18. The federal Adult Education Act, which funds the GED preparation programs provided in the Cleveland public schools, prohibits the use of these funds for individuals who are of compulsory school age under state law unless they were exempt from compulsory attendance by the superintendent of the district due to full-time employment. Education programs funded with JOBS or JTPA funds are not subject to the same restrictions and can enroll 16- and 17-year-olds.

as two hours of instruction per week). Members of this second group of teens were referred to the programs by LEAP staff or enrolled on their own.

1. **Instruction.** The three education providers used two different approaches to providing instruction in basic skills and preparing students for the GED test:

- The Center for Career Options offered self-paced, computer-assisted instruction. For basic skills instruction, CCO developed an open entry/open exit curriculum that combined computer-assisted instruction, paper-and-pencil exercises, small group discussion, and tutorial support. A second curriculum of computer-based and traditional materials was geared to preparing students for the GED exam. Pre-GED and GED classes met four hours a day, five days a week.

- Merrick House had developed an individualized, self-paced curriculum for its adult education program, and this curriculum was used in its enhanced GED classes. Friendly Inn contracted with Merrick House to use this curriculum and to be trained in its use. The curriculum relied on work sheets, assignments in the GED subject areas, and practice tests. Instruction was primarily one on one, but new topics were introduced in group sessions. Classes at both organizations met four days a week for three to four hours.

2. **Workshops and Case Management.** In an effort to make the enhanced GED programs as valuable as possible for LEAP teens, workshops on life management, employability development, family planning, health, and parenting were offered. The workshops involved discussions, speakers, and group activities for a minimum of three hours per week. These sessions were intended to address teens' informational and developmental needs and to show how education can lead to future life success.

Case management for the teens attending the GED programs involved assisting teens with locating child care, following up with teens who were not attending regularly, counseling on post-secondary options, and providing referrals for needed services. In general, program staff provided follow-up and referral services in the same manner they provided outreach to referred teens (some of whom were enrolled in the GED programs).

3. **Teens' Experience in the Programs.** As indicated in Table 5.4, 179 teens from the enhanced program group enrolled in the enhanced GED programs over two years. The average number of enrollees per month was 27.7. Merrick House enrolled the largest number of students.

The programs reported average GED class attendance rates by enrollees that ranged from 60 to 80 percent. These rates, particularly Merrick House's 80.2 percent, compare favorably with attendance rates for other programs serving adolescent parents. Attendance for the life skills activities

TABLE 5.4

PARTICIPATION OF LEAP TEENS IN ENHANCED GED PROGRAMS

Program	Total Number of Enrollees	Total Number of Re-Enrollees	Total Number Terminated	Average Number of Enrollees per Month	Average GED Attendance Rate (a) (%)	Average Hours of Life Skills per Month	Average Attendance Rate in Life Skills (a) (%)
Center for Career Options (b)	35	1	26	6.3	60.3	5.9 (c)	85.0 (c)
Friendly Inn	53	14	62	7.5	70.9	12.9	68.4
Merrick House	91	5	67	13.9	80.2	13.6	72.2

SOURCE: Calculations made from monthly reports completed by the program providers for the following time periods: April 1991 through June 1992 for Center for Career Options, June 1991 through June 1993 for Friendly Inn, and April 1991 through June 1993 for Merrick House.

NOTES: (a) This rate is the weighted average percentage of class days attended by enrollees.

(b) Due to changes in funding sources, CCO reported on their services to the LEAP teens only through June 1992 (although they continued to serve the young women beyond that time), and thus had 12 fewer months of data on their services.

(c) CCO provided life-skills services in only 6 out of 15 months. Attendance rates were reported for only 2 of those months.

was also reasonably high. Only 5 percent of teens who enrolled in the enhanced GED programs had received their GEDs through the end of June 1993. However, an additional 24 percent were still attending classes at that time.

The fact that, for some providers, a substantial proportion of enrollees were terminated and some later re-enrolled reflects the on-and-off nature of some teens' efforts to continue their education, making for the inconsistent progress reported by outreach workers.

The teens who entered the enhanced GED programs had a range of prior educational experiences. Some had been out of school for two or more years; others had just dropped out. Many reported that they felt that they did not learn much in school and were wasting their time there. Some also feared that several of Cleveland's public high schools were dangerous, and indicated that they had not felt safe while attending them.

Teens came into the GED programs testing at a wide range of grade levels. The average reading and math scores on assessment tests administered at the time of program enrollment were 8.7 and 7.9 for teens at the Center for Career Options, 9.3 and 7.6 for teens at Friendly Inn, and 7.8 and 6.8 for teens at Merrick House. Roughly one quarter of the students at CCO and Friendly Inn were below the seventh-grade level in reading at the time they entered those programs. The Merrick House population was more educationally disadvantaged, with 39 percent of their students testing below the seventh grade in reading. The teens were weaker in math: 27, 35, and 59 percent of teens at CCO, Friendly Inn, and Merrick House, respectively, tested below the seventh grade. Thus, many of these teens needed to attend GED programs for a significant period before they would be ready for the GED examination.

V. The Cost of the Enhanced Services

The school-based services cost $1,426, in fiscal year 1992 dollars, per enhanced program group member. The costs of the three specific services were as follows:

- Enhanced GRADS services cost $279 per teen in the enhanced program group. This figure reflects two estimates: 28 percent of enhanced program teens enrolled in GRADS at some point during the four-year period covered by the study; and the cost of GRADS in the enhanced high schools, over and above what GRADS cost in the regular schools, was approximately $1,000 per GRADS enrollee.[15]

[15]The net cost of $1,000 results from the fact that there were more GRADS teachers in the enhanced schools. There were 11 GRADS teachers, who cost the Cleveland public schools approximately $38,000 each (continued...)

- In-school child care cost – above what was paid by LEAP – was $574 per enhanced teen, with an estimated 10 percent of all enhanced teens using the care. The full cost of the care per child per day was estimated to be $20.90 for infants and $19.30 for toddlers; about half of this expense was borne by LEAP.

- In-school case management cost $573 per enhanced program group member. All enhanced teens who enrolled in an enhanced high school were assigned to an on-site manager, and the cost per enrollee was estimated to be approximately $2,100.[16] The net cost of each manager, over and above what it cost to assign a welfare-office-based case manager to teens in the regular schools, was about a third less than this figure.

The community-based services cost an additional $539 per enhanced program group member, with $206 of this amount going to outreach and $333 devoted to GED classes.[17] Fifty-seven percent of enhanced teens were referred for outreach (the cost per referral was $361), and 17 percent of enhanced teens enrolled in an enhanced GED class (approximately $2,000 per enrollee).

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[15](...continued)
(fiscal year 1993 dollars), in the six enhanced schools, compared with three to five GRADS teachers in the six regular schools (three in 1989-90, four in 1990-91 and 1991-92, and five in 1992-93). The total number of students enrolled in GRADS, which included non-LEAP as well as LEAP teens, varied during the four school years; in 1992-93, there were 502 enrollees in the enhanced schools and 327 enrollees in the regular schools. The cost of enhanced GRADS per enhanced program group member was estimated as the difference in GRADS cost, per enrollee, between the two sets of schools during this four-year period.

[16]The school-based case management unit, which included six managers and one supervisor, cost approximately $240,000 per year (in fiscal year 1993 dollars).

[17]These two services were paid for under contracts with the four service providers – funded by the George Gund Foundation, the Cleveland Foundation, the Cuyahoga County Department of Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – and totalled $443,750 for the period of April 1991 through June 1992. CCDHS has continued contracts with two of the providers, Merrick House and Friendly Inn, since June 1992.

CHAPTER 6

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF ENHANCED SERVICES IN CLEVELAND

The impact of the enhanced services in the Cleveland Student Parent Demonstration must be viewed in light of the limitations of the quasi-experimental research design used to estimate it. It was established in Chapter 4 that the overall impact of LEAP, as it operated in Cleveland, was based on an experimental research design whereby teens in the Cleveland research sample were placed randomly into either the program group (which received the LEAP treatment) or the control group (which did not) as part of the statewide evaluation of the LEAP program. Since random assignment creates groups that, on average, do not differ systematically in terms of initial characteristics (such as age, ethnicity, or education), any differences that arise between the two groups after random assignment can be attributed with certainty to exposure to LEAP.

Such certainty is not possible in the quasi-experimental design used to estimate the impact of the enhanced services. In this design, the research groups were drawn from two similar, preexisting groups of teens assigned to two groups of high schools – groups that, not having been created randomly, may have differed in initial characteristics. Since some of the differences between research groups in outcome measures may be due to these characteristics, rather than to the program being evaluated, the quasi-experimental methodology may give an inaccurate (or biased) estimate of the effect of the additional services. The true effect could be larger or smaller than what has been measured. In this report, regression analysis has been used to correct for observed differences between research groups. Nonetheless, one must still be cautious about attributing differences between the research groups to the effect of the enhanced services.

I. Similarity of the Enhanced and the Regular Groups

In order to have confidence in quasi-experimental estimates, it is crucial that the groups being compared are well matched. To determine whether the research groups used in this quasi-experimental analysis are well matched, one must consider three questions. First, are the teens in these groups similar in terms of initial characteristics? Second, are enhanced and regular schools similar in all aspects other than the provision of enhanced or regular services? And, finally, if differences do exist, do they matter?

A. Do Teens in the Enhanced and Regular Groups Have Similar Characteristics?

The initial demographic characteristics of program group teens in the enhanced and regular groups (groups C and D from Table 5.3) appear, with a few exceptions, to be similar (see Table 6.1). Enhanced and regular program group teens are similar in terms of age, highest grade completed, and number and ages of their children.

The largest differences between the groups are in ethnicity (79.2 percent black for the enhanced program group, 72.7 percent for the regular program group) and in the proportion who were on their parent's AFDC case at random assignment (49.3 percent for the enhanced group, 43.4 percent for the regular group). There are also statistically significant differences between enhanced and regular groups in the proportion of teens who had been out of school two years or more at random assignment (7.7 percent versus 11.1 percent, respectively). All impact results presented in this chapter are adjusted through regression analysis to account for the observed differences reported in Table 6.1 between enhanced and regular teens.[1]

B. Are Enhanced and Regular High Schools Similar?

For the comparison of the enhanced and regular groups to be a valid test of the effectiveness of enhanced services over regular services, however, there must be strong similarity between not only the two groups of teens but also the two groups of high schools, with the exception of the provision of enhanced or regular services. Otherwise, observed differences between enhanced and regular groups could be caused by other differences between enhanced and regular high schools, and not by the types of service offered. This issue is not, however, unique to quasi-experimental comparisons. The similarity of enhanced and regular schools would be a concern even if teens had been randomly assigned to high schools.

Table 6.2 presents a comparison of the two groups of high schools for the 1989-90 school year. Enhanced high schools are somewhat larger than regular high schools (average enrollment of 1,252 versus 1,044, respectively). On other measures, however, such as student-to-staff ratios, attendance rates, and dropout rates, enhanced and regular high schools do not appear substantially different.

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[1]Impact estimates in Chapter 4 are also adjusted to account for slight differences in initial characteristics between program and control groups. All impact estimates from both chapters are adjusted for differences between research groups in: age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, number and ages of children, enrollment status at random assignment, highest grade completed, and whether employed in the prior year.

TABLE 6.1

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF LEAP TEENS IN THE CLEVELAND SAMPLE, BY ENHANCEMENT STATUS

Characteristic	Enhanced Program Group (Group C)	Regular Program Group (Group D)	Full Program Group (Group A)	
Age (years) (%)				
15 or less	11.6	13.0	12.2	
16	18.9	17.7	18.4	
17	37.3	34.1	35.9	
18	29.1	30.6	29.7	
19	3.1	4.6	3.7	
Average age (years)	17.4	17.4	17.4	
Gender (%)				
Female	99.7	99.2	99.5	
Schooling status (%)				
Enrolled in school	56.2	54.3	55.4	
Out of school less than 1 year	22.7	19.7	21.3	
Out of school at least 1 year but less than 2 years	13.4	15.0	14.1	
Out of school 2 years or more	7.7	11.1	9.2	**
Average number of months since last attended school (non-enrolled teens only)	15.0	16.9	15.9	*
Average highest grade completed	9.4	9.5	9.4	
AFDC case status (%)				
Head of own AFDC case	45.4	48.5	46.8	
On parent's AFDC case	49.3	43.4	46.7	**
On another's AFDC case	5.3	8.1	6.5	**
Ethnicity (%)				
Black	79.2	72.7	76.3	***
White	16.5	22.0	18.9	***
Hispanic	3.6	4.9	4.2	
Other	0.8	0.5	0.6	
Marital status (%)				
Single, never married	96.4	95.4	96.0	
Currently married	1.9	3.6	2.7	*
Divorced, separated, or widowed	1.7	1.0	1.4	
Number of children (%)				
0 (a)	8.2	10.2	9.1	
1	79.7	77.1	78.5	
2 or more	12.1	12.7	12.4	

(continued)

TABLE 6.1 (continued)

Characteristic	Enhanced Program Group (Group C)	Regular Program Group (Group D)	Full Program Group (Group A)
Average number of children	1.0	1.0	1.0
Average age of youngest child (b) (months)	9.8	10.3	10.0
Average age of oldest child (b) (months)	12.3	12.8	12.5
Prior-year earnings (%)			
Any earnings during the prior 12 months	7.2	6.5	6.9
Sample size	777	615	1,392

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheets.

NOTES: A chi-square test or an F-test was applied to differences in baseline characteristics by enhancement status. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent, *** = 1 percent.

Distributions may not add to 100.0 percent because of rounding.

(a) In September 1990, LEAP eligibility was extended to teens pregnant with their first child.

(b) For those with children only.

TABLE 6.2

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF ENHANCED AND REGULAR HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE CLEVELAND STUDENT PARENT DEMONSTRATION

	Number of Students Enrolled	Ethnicity of Student Body (%)		Number of School Staff		Student–to–Staff Ratio	Average Number of Teacher Absences	Attendance Rate (%)
		Black	Other	Teachers	Other Staff			
Enhanced high schools								
East	1,100	83.8	16.2	62	31	11.8	6.1	72
East Technical	845	80.2	19.8	60	24	10.1	6.4	74
Glenville	1,258	80.9	19.1	70	27	13.0	7.7	81
John Adams	1,195	79.2	20.8	66	24	13.3	5.6	82
John Marshall	1,511	77.7	22.3	80	29	13.9	4.7	84
West Technical	1,600	53.5	46.5	99	35	11.9	5.7	74
Average	1,252	75.9	24.1	73	28	12.4	6.0	78
Regular high schools								
Collinwood	1,021	88.5	11.5	60	25	12.0	5.4	78
James Ford Rhodes	832	59.6	40.4	51	20	11.7	4.5	80
John Hay	1,191	78.0	22.0	64	25	13.4	5.9	82
John F. Kennedy	1,021	87.1	12.9	57	20	13.3	4.7	81
Lincoln–West	1,199	55.1	44.9	74	28	11.8	4.7	79
South	1,002	54.3	45.7	58	23	12.4	5.1	78
Average	1,044	70.4	29.6	61	24	12.4	5.0	80

(continued)

TABLE 6.2 (continued)

	Dropout Rate (%)	Failure Rate (%)	Reading Test (a) (%)			Vocabulary Test (a) (%)		
			Above Average	Average	Below Average	Above Average	Average	Below Average
Enhanced high schools								
East	24	30	6	65	29	5	58	37
East Technical	20	28	9	66	25	8	54	38
Glenville	15	27	11	66	23	14	59	27
John Adams	17	18	11	61	28	10	59	30
John Marshall	12	11	18	70	12	20	65	15
West Technical	24	24	7	57	35	6	57	37
Average	19	23	10	64	25	11	59	31
Regular high schools								
Collinwood	18	23	12	68	20	11	65	24
James Ford Rhodes	17	18	11	64	24	17	63	19
John Hay	17	18	13	67	19	11	61	28
John F. Kennedy	16	17	5	71	24	6	65	29
Lincoln–West	20	24	9	62	29	8	61	31
South	19	23	8	62	30	7	56	37
Average	18	21	10	66	24	10	62	28

SOURCE: Calculations from automated school records by Cleveland public schools Department of Supportive Services staff.

NOTES: All data are for the 1989–90 school year.
(a) These are scores on the California Achievement Tests, which are administered each year to students in all four grades (9 through 12) in Cleveland high schools.

C. Do These Differences Matter?

This analysis suggests that the enhanced and regular teens and schools are fairly well-matched comparison groups, and that a comparison of the outcomes of these two groups should provide a reasonable test of the effectiveness of enhanced services. Nonetheless, enhanced and regular high schools may differ in ways not measured here. For example, a principal who starts a day care center (and whose high school thus ends up in the enhanced group) may do other things to create a school environment more hospitable to teen parents. This more hospitable environment may then improve the school outcomes of teen parents for reasons unrelated to the enhanced services being tested.

In addition, because teens were not randomly assigned to high schools, the teens in the enhanced and regular group may differ in ways that are not observed or measured. While the analyses in Chapter 6 adjust for observed differences between the two groups of teens (such as age, ethnicity, or highest grade completed), they cannot adjust for any unmeasured differences that may exist (such as academic ability or motivation). For these reasons, results based on comparisons of enhanced and regular groups, as with all quasi-experimental comparisons, must be interpreted with more caution than results based on experimental comparisons, such as those presented in Chapter 4.

II. The Impact of Enhanced Services

Enhanced services were added to the LEAP program to see whether they would improve teen parents' education outcomes beyond the effect of LEAP. The additional impacts of these services are measured by comparing the outcomes of the enhanced program group (group C) with the regular program group (group D). All impacts appear small, and are statistically insignificant (see Table 6.3). The estimated impacts on high school attendance, high school credits, and GED completion are all near zero. There does appear to be some evidence that the enhancements increased high school graduation. By the end of the third academic year, 15.1 percent of enhanced program group teens had completed high school, compared with 12.7 percent of regular program group teens. However, this difference is not statistically significant.

In respect to the impact of enhanced services by initial enrollment status, all but one of the impacts remain statistically insignificant (see Table 6.4). (The one exception is a small negative effect on GED receipt among initially enrolled teens during the first year of follow-up. This negative impact is balanced by a positive effect on high school graduation.) Nonetheless, the enhanced services appear to have been most effective among students who were enrolled in school at random assignment, as was

TABLE 6.3

IMPACTS OF ENHANCED SERVICES ON HIGH SCHOOL AND GED OUTCOMES FOR LEAP TEENS IN THE CLEVELAND SAMPLE

Outcome	As of June 30, Year 1 (a) (%)			As of June 30, Year 2 (b) (%)			As of June 30, Year 3 (c) (%)		
	Enhanced Program Group (Group C)	Regular Program Group (Group D)	Difference	Enhanced Program Group (Group C)	Regular Program Group (Group D)	Difference	Enhanced Program Group (Group C)	Regular Program Group (Group D)	Difference
Attended high school in past 12 months	40.0	40.2	−0.2	22.6	22.3	0.3	12.1	11.0	1.1
Earned high school credit in past 12 months	28.2	29.0	−0.9	15.8	13.9	1.9	6.8	7.0	−0.2
Ever completed high school	7.3	6.1	1.2	12.5	10.7	1.8	15.1	12.7	2.4
Ever completed GED	1.1	1.7	−0.7	4.3	4.2	0.1	6.9	7.3	−0.4
Ever completed high school or GED	8.4	7.8	0.5	16.8	15.0	1.8	22.0	20.0	2.0
Sample size	777	615		777	615		777	615	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheets, automated school records from the Cleveland public school district, and automated GED testing data from the Ohio Department of Education.

NOTES: "June 30, year 1" denotes the first June 30th after random assignment; "June 30, year 2" and "June 30, year 3," the second and third June 30ths after random assignment, respectively.

A sample member is considered to have attended high school if she was present at least 20 days during the previous school year. Junior high school attendance is also counted in this definition.

A sample member is considered to have earned high school credit if she passed at least one semester of a one−credit course. Since credits are unavailable for sample members in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, sample members in these grades are considered to have earned high school credit if they were promoted to the next grade.

"Completed GED" refers to passing the GED test.

Differences, as well as enhanced and regular program group means, are regression−adjusted to correct for differences between the research groups in baseline characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

(continued)

TABLE 6.3 (continued)

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between enhanced and regular program groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

(a) At this point, 55.3 percent of the sample were age 18 or older, and 0 percent were age 20 or older (and thus no longer eligible for LEAP).

(b) 81.5 percent of the sample were age 18 or older, and 14.4 percent were age 20 or older.

(c) 92.5 percent of the sample were age 18 or older, and 55.3 percent were age 20 or older.

TABLE 6.4

IMPACTS OF ENHANCED SERVICES ON HIGH SCHOOL AND GED OUTCOMES FOR LEAP TEENS IN THE CLEVELAND SAMPLE, BY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT STATUS AT RANDOM ASSIGNMENT

Subgroup and Outcome	As of June 30, Year 1 (a) (%)			As of June 30, Year 2 (b) (%)			As of June 30, Year 3 (c) (%)		
	Enhanced Program Group (Group C)	Regular Program Group (Group D)	Difference	Enhanced Program Group (Group C)	Regular Program Group (Group D)	Difference	Enhanced Program Group (Group C)	Regular Program Group (Group D)	Difference
Enrolled in school at random assignment									
Attended high school in past 12 months	61.1	60.6	0.5	34.9	34.5	0.4	19.1	17.7	1.3
Earned high school credit in past 12 months	46.7	47.1	−0.4	25.9	22.3	3.6	11.4	11.5	−0.1
Ever completed high school	12.7	10.5	2.2	21.0	17.8	3.2	25.5	21.3	4.2
Ever completed GED	0.5	2.2	−1.7 **	3.3	4.1	−0.8	5.1	6.2	−1.1
Ever completed high school or GED	13.1	12.7	0.5	24.3	22.0	2.4	30.6	27.5	3.1
Sample size	437	334		437	334		437	334	
Not enrolled in school at random assignment									
Attended high school in past 12 months	13.8	14.7	−0.9	7.6	6.9	0.7	3.4	2.7	0.7
Earned high school credit in past 12 months	5.2	6.9	−1.7	3.1	3.4	−0.3	1.1	1.4	−0.3
Ever completed high school	0.6	1.1	−0.5	2.0	2.2	−0.3	2.3	2.2	0.0
Ever completed GED	1.8	1.2	0.6	5.6	4.3	1.3	9.1	8.6	0.6
Ever completed high school or GED	2.4	2.3	0.0	7.6	6.5	1.1	11.4	10.8	0.6
Sample size	340	281		340	281		340	281	

(continued)

TABLE 6.4 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheets, automated school records from the Cleveland public school district, and automated GED testing data from the Ohio Department of Education.

NOTES: "June 30, year 1" denotes the first June 30th after random assignment; "June 30, year 2" and "June 30, year 3," the second and third June 30ths after random assignment, respectively.

A sample member is considered to have attended high school if she was present at least 20 days during the previous school year. Junior high school attendance is also counted in this definition.

A sample member is considered to have earned high school credit if she passed at least one semester of a one-credit course. Since credits are unavailable for sample members in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, sample members in these grades are considered to have earned high school credit if they were promoted to the next grade.

"Completed GED" refers to passing the GED test.

Differences, as well as enhanced and regular program group means, are regression-adjusted to correct for differences between the research groups in baseline characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between enhanced and regular program groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

(a) At this point, 45.7 percent of the initially enrolled sample were age 18 or older, and 0 percent were age 20 or older (and thus no longer eligible for LEAP); 67.3 percent of the initially not enrolled sample were age 18 or older, and 0 percent were age 20 or older.

(b) 74.8 percent of the initially enrolled sample were age 18 or older, and 7.5 percent were age 20 or older; 89.7 percent of the initially not enrolled sample were age 18 or older, and 23.0 percent were age 20 or older.

(c) 89.4 percent of the initially enrolled sample were age 18 or older, and 45.7 percent were age 20 or older; 96.3 percent of the initially not enrolled sample were age 18 or older, and 67.3 percent were age 20 or older.

the LEAP program (see Chapter 4). Among teens in LEAP who were initially enrolled, the enhancements increased high school completion rates from 21.3 to 25.5 percent by the end of the third academic year, a 4.2 percentage point impact (significant at the 15 percent level). Some of this increase in high school graduations was offset by fewer GEDs earned by LEAP teens in the enhanced group, making the overall completion impact somewhat smaller than the impact on high school graduations. At the end of the follow-up period, the overall completion impact for initially enrolled teens was 3.1 percentage points, an increase from 27.5 to 30.6 percent. For teens who were initially not enrolled, however, all impacts are near zero.

These results suggest that the enhanced services may have had some success in encouraging initially enrolled LEAP teens to remain in school until they graduated. In contrast, the enhancements appear to have had no success in encouraging teens who were not initially enrolled to return to high school or to earn a GED. This pattern of moderate success with initially enrolled teens and limited or no success with teens who were initially not enrolled is similar to the pattern observed for the basic LEAP treatment in Chapter 4.

III. Is This a "Fair Test" of Enhanced Services?

These results appear to provide somewhat discouraging evidence concerning the ability of additional services to improve the educational outcomes of teen parents beyond the impact of the basic LEAP treatment, particularly for teens who were out of school when they entered LEAP. However, before dismissing the importance of additional services, one must consider carefully whether the research design used in the Cleveland Demonstration provided a "fair test" of enhanced services. Earlier in this chapter, it was concluded, with some cautions, that the research groups were well matched.

There are, however, several other reasons why the size of the enhancement effects presented here may be somewhat misleading. First, the enhanced services did not begin immediately after random assignment for all teens. Although random assignment for the LEAP evaluation began in July 1989, the enhanced school-based services were phased in over the 1989-90 and 1990-91 school years. Further, the enhanced community-based services did not begin until April 1991, almost two years after random assignment for some teens. As discussed in Chapter 4, the analysis presented here excludes older sample members who aged out of LEAP before or shortly after all the additional services were in place, and thus had little or no exposure to the full set of enhancements. Nonetheless, some teens included in the analysis were in LEAP for a year or more before all the enhanced services were in

place. It is likely, therefore, that the measured effect of the enhancements would have been larger, if all the additional services had been available to all enhanced teens from the moment they entered LEAP.

Second, regular teens were eligible for some services. In particular, four of six regular high schools offered the GRADS program, while all six enhanced high schools offered GRADS.[2] In addition, one of the enhanced services (on-site child care) was available only in four of the six enhanced schools for most of the follow-up period. Therefore, the enhanced-regular comparison measures the impact not of moving from a "no-service" to a "full-service" environment, but rather of moving from an environment where some services are available to one where more services are available. If this demonstration had included a "no-service" versus "full-service" comparison, enhanced-regular differences would likely have been larger.

Third, it is possible that there was some "crossover" between enhanced and regular groups during the period examined for this analysis. Teens are defined as being in the enhanced or regular groups based on their address at the time of random assignment. However, if a teen in the regular group moved to an address where she would attend an enhanced high school, then she may have received enhanced services at that school. Conversely, if an enhanced teen moved to an address where she would attend a regular high school, she would no longer have been able to receive enhanced services.[3] This situation, where some teens in the regular group may have received enhanced services and some enhanced teens may have received regular services, reduces differences in treatment between the groups and, thus, also the estimated impact of the enhanced services.

Fourth, it is possible that the impact of the enhanced services would have been larger if they had been implemented without LEAP. For example, LEAP's bonuses and sanctions may have caused some teens to complete high school or pass the GED test who, in the absence of LEAP, would have been induced to complete high school or pass the GED test by the enhanced services. Since someone can only complete high school or pass the GED test once, and since teens who were at the threshold of completing school have already been encouraged to do so by LEAP, they cannot be encouraged to complete by the additional services. Therefore, the success of LEAP may have made it more difficult

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[2]During the 1989-90 school year, only three of six regular high schools offered GRADS.

[3]LEAP teens in the enhanced group who moved to an address where they would attend a regular high school continued to be eligible for enhanced community-based services. Similarly, regular LEAP teens who moved to an address where they would attend an enhanced high school remained ineligible for enhanced community-based services.

for the enhancements to encourage additional completions.[4]

Finally, the measured effect of the enhanced services may be small because they were used by only a fairly small fraction of the teens in the sample. For example, since only 43 percent of teens in the enhanced program group attended school for at least a month during the three-year follow-up period, the remaining 57 percent had virtually no exposure to any of the enhanced school-based services provided in the high schools.

Similarly, only teens who were referred for community outreach due to noncompliance with the LEAP mandate could receive enhanced community-based services. About 57 percent of the enhanced program group were referred for outreach. In addition, only about two thirds of referred teens were ever contacted by outreach providers. Therefore, only about 40 percent of enhanced LEAP teens were exposed to the enhanced community-based services.

These low rates of exposure to the additional services suggest that, while the enhancement impact on the full sample was small, the impact on the subgroup of teens who actually used these services might be substantial. In order to explore this possibility, two additional subgroups were created. The first subgroup includes teens who attended school during the follow-up period and thus had at least some exposure to the school-based enhancements. Of course, teens in this subgroup may have also been exposed to the community-based enhancements during periods when they were not enrolled in school.

The second subgroup includes enhanced program group teens who were referred for community outreach. However, in order to measure the enhancement impact for this "referred" subgroup, one must identify similar teens in the regular group for comparison – that is, teens in the regular program group who *would have been referred* for outreach if they had been in the enhanced group. Enhanced program group teens were referred for community outreach if they received a sanction request on or after April 1, 1991 (when the enhanced community-based services began). Therefore, the "referred" subgroup is defined as both enhanced and regular program group teens who received a sanction request on or after this date. Regular teens in this subgroup represent those teens who *would have been referred* for outreach if they had been in the enhanced group.[5]

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[4]As described in Chapter 5, since the enhanced control group (group E) received only a subset of the enhanced services, the enhanced-control versus regular-control comparison (group E versus group F) does not measure the effect of the full set of enhanced services in the absence of LEAP.

[5]A few enhanced teens who were not complying with the LEAP mandate, but were exempt from sanctioning, were also referred for community outreach. Similar regular teens are included in the "referred" subgroup.

The "referred" subgroup (which includes "would have been referred" regular teens) represents a group of less compliant teens who were specially targeted for additional services. The subgroup includes teens who were likely to receive enhanced community-based services; no teens omitted from the subgroup received any community-based enhancements. Recall, however, that about a third of referred teens were never contacted by outreach workers and thus did not receive any of the community-based services. Unfortunately, it is not possible to refine this subgroup further to include only teens who were contacted by outreach workers, since it is not known which regular teens in the "referred" subgroup *would have been contacted* if they had been in the enhanced group. The important point is that not all enhanced teens in the subgroup actually received enhanced community-based services. In addition, referred teens may have received enhanced school-based services during periods when they were attending school.

The enhanced-regular comparisons created by these two subgroups are considered "nonexperimental" comparisons because the subgroups were defined according to behavior that occurred after the beginning of the program being studied. In this case, the enhancements may have created differences between the kinds of enhanced and regular teens in the subgroups that would make a comparison of these enhanced and regular teens misleading. For example, suppose that the additional services caused some less academically motivated enhanced teens to attend school. Enhanced attendees would then be, in some sense, a less select group (in terms of their initial characteristics) than regular attendees, and therefore be less likely to graduate than their counterparts in the regular group. If this were the case, the enhanced-regular "attendee" comparison would produce a misleading measure of the effect of the enhancements on credits and completions among teens who attended school at all. The "referred" comparison would be similarly misleading, if the enhancements created differences between enhanced and regular teens who received a sanction request after April 1991.

Due to the potential biases inherent in such comparisons, nonexperimental results must be treated with additional caution. One important piece of evidence supporting the reliability of the nonexperimental comparisons used in this report is that the percentages of enhanced teens who are included in the "attendee" and the "referred" subgroups are virtually identical to the percentages of regular teens in these subgroups. For example, 43 percent of enhanced LEAP teens and 42 percent of regular LEAP teens are in the "attendee" subgroup, while 57 percent of both groups are in the

"referred" subgroup.[6] This evidence, while not conclusive, suggests that the enhancements did not introduce differences in the composition of these subgroups by enhanced-regular status. In addition, since regression analysis has been used to adjust for observed differences between enhanced and regular teens (in such things as age, ethnicity, or initial enrollment status) for all impact estimates in this report, the enhanced-regular comparisons should yield fairly reliable estimates of the effect of the enhancements on these subgroups of teens (Tables 6.5 and 6.6).

As expected, the effects of the enhancements are larger for the LEAP teens who attended school during the follow-up period (see Table 6.5) than for the full sample (see Table 6.3). By the end of the third academic year, 39.5 percent of those in the enhanced group who attended school had graduated from high school or passed the GED test, compared with 32.6 percent of those in the regular group, a statistically significant 6.9 percentage point difference in completion. Further, most of this impact is on high school completion. Among teens who attended at least a month, the enhancements increased high school graduation rates by 5.2 percentage points by the end of the third year (significant at the 15 percent level).

As for LEAP teens who were referred for community outreach (Table 6.6), during the second academic year the enhancements had some modest success at increasing the number of referred teens attending school (an impact of 2.8 percentage points) and, particularly, earning high school credit (an impact of 4.2 percentage points). Some of this increase in school attendance and progress appears to have translated into a modest increase in completion by the end of the follow-up. At the end of the third academic year, 11.5 percent of enhanced teens and 8.2 percent of regular teens had graduated from high school or earned a GED, a 3.4 percentage point impact which is significant at the 15 percent level. Note the low rate of completion for this subgroup of less compliant teens, compared with the overall completion rate of 21 percent rate for all LEAP teens (see Table 4.4).

These results suggest that the enhancements had some limited success at encouraging completion among the less compliant teens who were specifically targeted for additional services. This conclusion seems particularly valid in light of the fact that about a third of these teens were never contacted by outreach providers and thus received no community-based services.

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[6]The fact that 43 percent and 57 percent sum to 100 percent is coincidental, since sample members can be in both the "attendee" and "referred" subgroups or in neither subgroup.

TABLE 6.5

IMPACTS OF ENHANCED SERVICES ON HIGH SCHOOL AND GED OUTCOMES FOR LEAP TEENS IN THE CLEVELAND SAMPLE WHO ATTENDED SCHOOL DURING THE FOLLOW-UP PERIOD

Outcome	As of June 30, Year 1 (a) (%)			As of June 30, Year 2 (b) (%)			As of June 30, Year 3 (c) (%)		
	Enhanced Program Group (Group C)	Regular Program Group (Group D)	Difference	Enhanced Program Group (Group C)	Regular Program Group (Group D)	Difference	Enhanced Program Group (Group C)	Regular Program Group (Group D)	Difference
Attended high school in past 12 months	93.5	93.7	-0.2	54.2	51.3	2.9	28.7	25.8	2.9
Earned high school credit in past 12 months	65.7	68.2	-2.5	37.4	31.8	5.6	16.2	16.3	-0.1
Ever completed high school	15.7	14.4	1.3	28.2	24.7	3.4	34.3	29.1	5.2
Ever completed GED	0.4	0.3	0.1	3.2	1.7	1.4	5.2	3.6	1.7
Ever completed high school or GED	16.1	14.7	1.4	31.3	26.5	4.9	39.5	32.6	6.9 **
Sample size	332	261		332	261		332	261	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheets, automated school records from the Cleveland public school district, and automated GED testing data from the Ohio Department of Education.

NOTES: A sample member is considered to have "attended school during the follow-up period" if she attended at least 20 days in one or more of the three academic years.

"June 30, year 1" denotes the first June 30th after random assignment; "June 30, year 2" and "June 30, year 3," the second and third June 30ths after random assignment, respectively.

A sample member is considered to have "attended high school in past 12 months" if she was present at least 20 days during the previous school year. Junior high school attendance is also counted in this definition.

A sample member is considered to have earned high school credit if she passed at least one semester of a one-credit course. Since credits are unavailable for sample members in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, sample members in these grades are considered to have earned high school credit if they were promoted to the next grade.

"Completed GED" refers to passing the GED test.

Differences, as well as enhanced and regular program group means, are regression-adjusted to correct for differences between the research groups in baseline characteristics.

(continued)

TABLE 6.5 (continued)

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between enhanced and regular program groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

(a) At this point, 39.0 percent of the sample were age 18 or older, and 0 percent were age 20 or older (and thus no longer eligible for LEAP).

(b) 69.5 percent of the sample were age 18 or older, and 3.9 percent were age 20 or older.

(c) 86.8 percent of the sample were age 18 or older, and 39.0 percent were age 20 or older.

TABLE 6.6

IMPACTS OF ENHANCED SERVICES ON HIGH SCHOOL AND GED OUTCOMES FOR LEAP TEENS IN THE CLEVELAND SAMPLE WHO WERE REFERRED FOR COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Outcome	As of June 30, Year 1 (a) (%)			As of June 30, Year 2 (b) (%)			As of June 30, Year 3 (c) (%)		
	Enhanced Program Group (Group C)	Regular Program Group (Group D)	Difference	Enhanced Program Group (Group C)	Regular Program Group (Group D)	Difference	Enhanced Program Group (Group C)	Regular Program Group (Group D)	Difference
Attended high school in past 12 months	33.8	33.5	0.2	19.5	16.7	2.8	10.4	7.8	2.6
Earned high school credit in past 12 months	20.1	20.4	−0.3	11.8	7.6	4.2 **	4.5	4.0	0.5
Ever completed high school	0.7	0.8	−0.1	3.4	2.5	0.9	5.1	3.0	2.1
Ever completed GED	0.5	0.8	−0.4	2.7	2.5	0.2	6.5	5.2	1.3
Ever completed high school or GED	1.2	1.6	−0.4	6.1	5.0	1.1	11.5	8.2	3.4
Sample size	440	353		440	353		440	353	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheets, automated school records from the Cleveland public school district, and automated GED testing data from the Ohio Department of Education.

NOTES: Enhanced program group teens were referred for community outreach if they received a sanction request on or after April 1, 1991 (when the community−based services began). Figures in this table include teens in the enhanced and regular program groups who received a sanction request on or after this date. A few enhanced teens who were not complying with the LEAP mandate, but were exempt from sanctioning, were also referred for community outreach. Outcomes for these additional referred enhanced teens and similar regular teens are also included in this table.

"June 30, year 1" denotes the first June 30th after random assignment; "June 30, year 2" and "June 30, year 3," the second and their June 30ths after random assignment, respectively.

A sample member is considered to have attended high school if she was present at least 20 days during the previous school year. Junior high school attendance is also counted in this definition.

A sample member is considered to have earned high school credit if she passed at least one semester of a one−credit course. Since credits are unavailable for sample members in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, sample members in these grades are considered to have earned high school credit if they were promoted to the next grade.

"Completed GED" refers to passing the GED test.

(continued)

TABLE 6.6 (continued)

Differences, as well as enhanced and regular program group means, are regression–adjusted to correct for differences between the research groups in baseline characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

A two–tailed t–test was applied to differences between enhanced and regular program groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

(a) At this point, 54.0 percent of the sample were age 18 or older, and 0 percent were age 20 or older (and thus no longer eligible for LEAP).

(b) 82.1 percent of the sample were age 18 or older, and 14.1 percent were age 20 or older.

(c) 92.8 percent of the sample were age 18 or older, and 54.0 percent were age 20 or older.

IV. The Impact of Enhanced Services on Bonuses and Sanctions

The enhanced services seem to have had little impact on the level of bonus and sanction receipt among enhanced teens (not shown in tables). However, since these estimates are based on analysis of bonus and sanction data for a very small sample (170 teens), they should be interpreted with caution.

There was little substantial (and no statistically significant) difference in total bonus or sanction requests between enhanced and regular teens during the follow-up period. The enhanced program group (group C in Table 5.3) averaged 5.6 bonus requests and 6.1 sanction requests, while the regular program group (group D) averaged 6.0 bonus and 6.6 sanction requests. However, some limited evidence suggests that the enhancements may have reduced the number of teens receiving repeated sanctions. For example, a somewhat lower percentage of enhanced teens than regular teens received nine or more sanctions during the follow-up period: 29 percent of enhanced teens and 34 percent of regular teens. This difference is not statistically significant.

Repeated sanctioning appears to have been reduced primarily among teens who were targeted for the enhanced community-based services. For example, 50 percent of enhanced teens who were referred for community outreach received nine or more sanctions, compared with 58 percent of regular teens who would have been referred. Due to the very small sample sizes, this difference is not statistically significant.

V. The Combined Impact of LEAP and Enhanced Services

An important policy question that these data can address is: What is the combined effect of LEAP and the service enhancements? In other words, what is the effect of moving from an environment with no bonuses and sanctions and only regular services to an environment with both LEAP and the enhanced services? This question can be addressed by comparing the regular control group (group F from Table 5.3) with the enhanced program group (group C). Teens in the enhanced program group were both subject to LEAP's bonuses and sanctions and eligible for the additional services, while regular controls were not subject to the LEAP mandate and received only regular services. Since this comparison matches a group of teens from the enhanced group with a group of regular teens, it is quasi-experimental and must be interpreted with caution.

In addition to measuring the combined impact of LEAP and the enhancements, using a third research group (the regular program group, group D) allows this combined impact to be broken down

into its two components: the impact of LEAP without the enhancements and the additional impact of the enhanced services. The first component of this combined impact can be measured by comparing the regular program group (group D) with the regular control group (group F). These impacts are somewhat different from those presented in Chapter 4, which measured the overall impact of LEAP and compared all program group teens (group A) with all control group teens (group B). The second component is measured by comparing the enhanced program group (group C) with the regular program group (group D), as in earlier tables in this chapter.

The combined impacts of LEAP and the enhancements, as well as the two components of these impacts, are presented in Table 6.7. As seen in the last panel of the table, the combined impact of LEAP and the enhanced services is 8.5 percentage points on school completion at the end of the third academic year. This combined impact breaks down into a 6.5 percentage point impact of LEAP without the enhancements and a 2.0 percentage point additional impact of the enhancements. Therefore, although the additional impact of the enhancements was fairly small, they did increase the completion impact by about a third, from about 6 percentage points with LEAP alone, to 8 percentage points with LEAP and the enhancements combined.

TABLE 6.7

IMPACTS OF LEAP's BONUSES AND SANCTIONS AND OF ENHANCED SERVICES ON HIGH SCHOOL AND GED OUTCOMES AT THE END OF THE THIRD POST-RANDOM ASSIGNMENT ACADEMIC YEAR

Outcome	Impact of LEAP Bonuses and Sanctions Without Enhancements (%)			Additional Impact of Enhanced Services (%)			Impact of LEAP Bonuses and Sanctions and Enhanced Services Combined (%)		
	Regular Program Group (Group D)	Regular Control Group (Group F)	Difference	Enhanced Program Group (Group C)	Regular Program Group (Group D)	Difference	Enhanced Program Group (Group C)	Regular Control Group (Group F)	Difference
Attended high school in past 12 months	11.0	10.2	0.8	12.1	11.0	1.1	12.1	10.2	1.8
Earned high school credit in past 12 months	7.0	5.9	1.1	6.8	7.0	−0.2	6.8	5.9	0.9
Ever completed high school	12.7	10.6	2.1	15.1	12.7	2.4	15.1	10.6	4.5
Ever completed GED	7.3	2.9	4.4 *	6.9	7.3	−0.4	6.9	2.9	4.0 *
Ever completed high school or GED	20.0	13.5	6.5 *	22.0	20.0	2.0	22.0	13.5	8.5 **
Sample size	615	145		777	615		777	145	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheets, automated school records from the Cleveland public school district, and automated GED testing data from the Ohio Department of Education.

NOTES: A sample member is considered to have attended high school if she was present at least 20 days during the previous school year. Junior high school attendance is also counted in this definition.

A sample member is considered to have earned high school credit if she passed at least one semester of a one-credit course. Since credits are unavailable for sample members in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, sample members in these grades are considered to have earned high school credit if they were promoted to the next grade.

"Completed GED" refers to passing the GED test.

Differences, as well as research group means, are regression-adjusted to correct for differences between the research groups in baseline characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The LEAP program in Cleveland has operated relatively smoothly and inexpensively after experiencing some early implementation problems. It has succeeded in significantly increasing the proportion of teen parents on welfare who earn a high school diploma or a GED certificate. On their own, 15.5 percent of LEAP-eligible teens completed high school or received a GED after three years of follow-up. LEAP increased that proportion to 21.1 percent, a 5.6 percentage point impact. These findings make LEAP — a relatively inexpensive approach that uses financial incentives and penalties and relies on the mainstream school system to provide most services — an attractive policy tool for helping teen parents finish their education.

The enhanced services offered to approximately half of the teens in Cleveland transformed LEAP into a much more comprehensive model and, at the same time, increased its costs from $971 to more than $2,900 per eligible teen. The overall effect of these additional services was relatively small: 22 percent of LEAP teens who received enhanced services completed high school or earned a GED within three years, compared with 20 percent of LEAP teens who received regular services, a 2 percentage point difference that is not statistically significant. This small effect, however, masks substantially larger effects for certain groups of teens.

One important reason for the small overall effect of the additional services is that many teens did not receive them. More than half of LEAP teens did not attend school at all during the follow-up period, and therefore received no in-school services. In addition, many out-of-school teens were never reached by the community-based services. When the focus is shifted to those LEAP teens who did attend school, the effect of the additional services appeared to be substantially larger. Among these teens, 40 percent of those assigned to enhanced schools (and who thus received enhanced services) completed high school or a GED, compared with 33 percent assigned to regular schools (and who thus received only regular services), a 7 percentage point difference at the end of the follow-up period.

The success of both LEAP and the enhanced services appears to vary substantially by initial school enrollment status. Both LEAP and the enhanced services were effective in promoting school completion among teens who were enrolled in school at random assignment. On their own, 20 percent of initially enrolled teens earned a high school diploma or a GED within three years. The LEAP program substantially improved this performance, increasing completion rates by about nine percentage points (from 20 to 29 percent). Moreover, the enhanced services appear to have increased the school

completion rate of initially enrolled teens beyond this effect of LEAP alone.

The findings for teens who were not enrolled in school when they entered LEAP are much more discouraging. Without intervention, fewer than 9 percent of dropouts received a diploma or GED within three years. LEAP and the enhanced services did little to change this poor outcome. Moreover, because the dropouts' behavior was not altered appreciably, LEAP sanctions substantially reduced their families' welfare grants.

The results from Cleveland, though promising, indicate that the combination of financial incentives and services accomplished less than had been hoped. Can more be achieved? The answer is almost certainly yes. First, while LEAP's financial incentive structure was eventually implemented well in Cuyahoga County, the program experienced substantial operational problems during its first two years, and all of the Cleveland sample experienced LEAP at least partly during this time. LEAP has operated more smoothly than this, both in other counties in Ohio and in Cuyahoga County after 1991; and evidence presented in the last LEAP report suggested that the program's impact on education outcomes is correlated with its performance in carrying out the grant adjustments LEAP is supposed to make. A key ingredient to implementing an incentive system well appears to be a computerized grant-adjustment capacity.

Second, while the enhanced community-based services were well implemented by two of the four service providers, much less success was achieved by the other two providers during the period the demonstration project operated. This often happens in demonstration programs, which are developed to test innovative program techniques. Nonetheless, some important lessons were learned in this project. Appropriate guidance could help future service providers in efforts of this kind to be more effective than were providers in the Cleveland program.

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LEAP: Implementing a Welfare Initiative to Improve School Attendance Among Teenage Parents. 1991. Dan Bloom, Hilary Kopp, David Long, Denise Polit.

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About MDRC

The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) is a nonprofit social policy research organization founded in 1974 and located in New York City and San Francisco. Its mission is to design and rigorously field-test promising education and employment-related programs aimed at improving the well-being of disadvantaged adults and youth, and to provide policymakers and practitioners with reliable evidence on the effectiveness of social programs. Through this work, and its technical assistance to program administrators, MDRC seeks to enhance the quality of public policies and programs. MDRC actively disseminates the results of its research through its publications and through interchange with policymakers, administrators, practitioners, and the public.

Over the past two decades – working in partnership with more than forty states, the federal government, scores of communities, and numerous private philanthropies – MDRC has developed and studied more than three dozen promising social policy initiatives.

Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation

Three Park Avenue
New York, New York 10016
(212) 532-3200

88 Kearny Street, Suite 1650
San Francisco, California 94108
(415) 781-3800

MDRC

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